



Escape Routes

META-ANALYSIS OF HOMELESSNESS IN L.A.

April 2018



ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

Knowledge for the Greater Good

Escape Routes

Meta-Analysis of Homelessness in Los Angeles County

April 2018

Economic Roundtable

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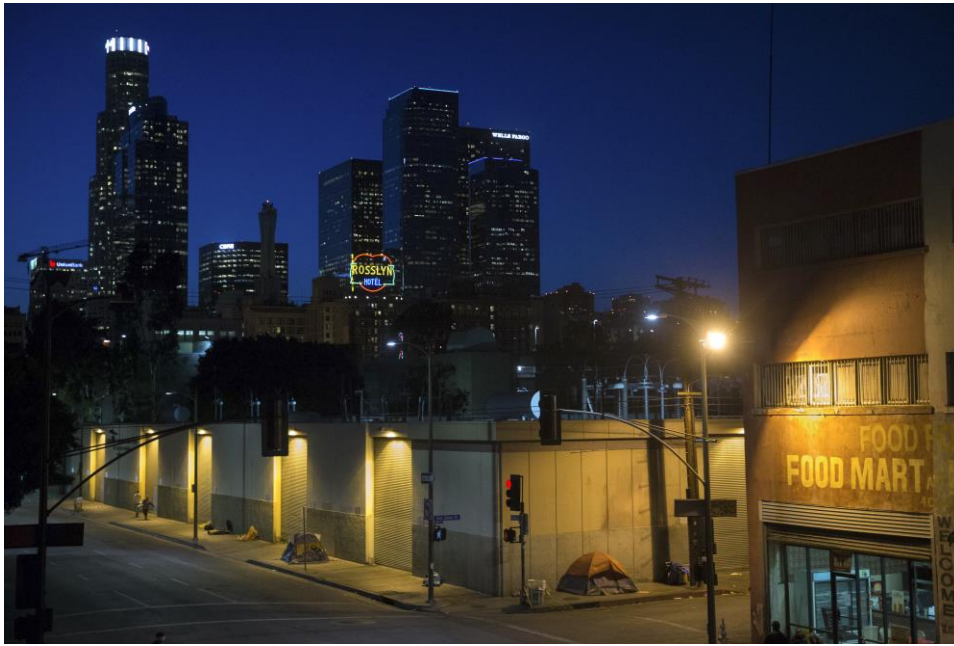
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Executive Summary

Chronic homelessness is the outcome of repeated system-wide failures and requires system-wide engagement.

Objective

We can't navigate without a map. If we can't see the whole picture of homelessness, we can't begin to solve the problem. This meta-analysis brings together 26 point-in-time data sets to provide a single panoramic description of people without homes who are living in places not meant for human habitation. The objective is to identify the common reality underlying the data and provide a description that is more comprehensive and reliable than information from any single source.

Escape Routes

The attributes of people experiencing homelessness change if they remain homeless. Poverty and inability to pay for housing may be the precipitating cause for first becoming homeless. Over time, however, social disconnection and legal, medical and behavioral health problems emerge as increasingly formidable barriers to escaping homelessness.

Chronic homelessness is the outcome of repeated system-wide failures to provide lasting help. To reduce the size of the chronically homeless population, it is necessary to reduce the number of people who have protracted and repeated episodes of homelessness. This requires system-wide engagement by the entire range of public and private service providers that touch or should touch the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.

In addition to building affordable housing, the path for ending Los Angeles County's crisis of chronic homelessness is through identifying individuals with a high risk of becoming chronically homeless early after the onset of homelessness and intervening with coordinated system-wide assistance that supports a permanent exit from homelessness before the problem is catastrophic.

Homelessness results from a cascade of system-wide failures and requires system-wide engagement. The homelessness response system can't be the only system providing thoughtful, targeted interventions to individuals who fall into homelessness.

The pragmatic argument for early interventions such as employment is that they cost much less than the roughly \$300,000 in subsidies required to make a housing unit permanently affordable for a formerly homeless person. If early interventions are accurately targeted on individuals who have a high risk of becoming chronically homeless, the avoided public costs will more than offset the cost of the intervention.

This is not to say that employment interventions are inexpensive. The package of system-wide services that are needed includes, but isn't limited to, temporary housing, temporary income maintenance, training, employment subsidies, child care, and transportation.

Greatly increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing continues to be crucial. Jobs and other early interventions must be parallel efforts that augment rather than divert resources from housing chronically homeless individuals.

Precarious Housing

A large population experiences short episodes of homelessness. Out of this larger population, some individuals' homeless episodes reoccur and grow longer, resulting in persistent homelessness.

Almost 600,000 Los Angeles County residents are in poverty and spend 90 percent or more of their income on housing. However, on any given day, over 90 percent of these extremely precariously housed individuals succeed in avoiding homelessness through employment, public assistance, housing support, help from friends and relatives, social services, and the generosity of people in their lives.

Each one percentage point increase in the success rate of precariously housed individuals avoiding homelessness will reduce the number of people who become homeless by at least 10 percent. This can be achieved by strengthening the tools precariously housed people already use to remain housed.

The large share of the homeless population that experiences homelessness for only a short period of time has important operational implications. There is more diversity among people experiencing homelessness and often greater capacity to achieve an exit than is commonly appreciated.

Looking at an annual population scenario, 48 percent of individuals are estimated to be homeless for one month or less, and there is a progressive decline in the number of people who remain homeless from one month to the next until the twelfth month, when the long-term homeless population balloons.

Further reducing the share of people who continue to be homeless from one month to the next is essential if we are to reduce the number of people who become stuck in chronic homelessness.

Even a ten percent increase in the monthly exit rates from homelessness could reduce the number of people who become persistently homeless by almost half.

Based on a scenario of the annual homeless population, our preliminary estimate is that 2,600 to 5,200 individuals fall into persistent homelessness each year. Many of these individuals also have disabilities, marking them as chronically homeless. Los Angeles County's current population of chronically homeless individuals is the cumulative outcome of many years of slow attrition into persistent homelessness.

Reducing chronic homelessness by increasing early and lasting exits from homelessness requires targeting the right interventions on the right individuals as quickly as possible.

A 10% increase in monthly exit rates from homelessness would reduce the number of people who become persistently homeless by almost half.

Attributes of Homeless Residents

African-American boys and girls 0 to 17 years of age are extremely over-represented among children experiencing homelessness. The rate of homelessness for African-American children is 10 times greater than the rate for Latino children and 13 times greater than the rate for European-American children. The ethnically disproportionate burden of homelessness among African-American adults begins in childhood.

The rate of homelessness for African-American children is 13 times greater than the rate for European-American children.

African-American men 45 to 54 years of age are 16 times more prevalent among homeless residents than in the overall population.

By far the most frequently given reason for homelessness is unemployment, lack of cash aid, and consequent lack of money—cited by 40 percent of individuals. A frequent compounding factor is breakdown of social connections. This includes family conflict, breakup, violence, and death.

Younger individuals and women are the most likely to identify social disconnection as a reason for being homeless. Over a third of homeless adults and over half of women report having experienced violence at the hands of someone close to them.

Across all age groups of unsheltered homeless adults 25 years of age and older, over a quarter said that their first homeless episode occurred when they were between 18 and 24 years of age, a quarter say it was when they were 25 to 34, and a fifth say it was when they were children.

However, the age profile for the onset of homelessness varies by the age of the respondent, with the onset shifting to older ages for respondents who are older. This suggests that for many individuals, even older individuals, the entry into homelessness has been recent.

When asked what kind of help they need to escape homelessness, individuals living on the street say that getting housing is the most important type of help, followed by transportation, public benefits, jobs, job training or education, and health care.

These priorities are largely consistent across ethnic and gender groups. The greatest divergence in priorities is about the importance of a job or job training and is based on age and length of time homeless. Developing skills and finding a job is very important for almost three-quarters of individuals 25 to 34 years of age and people who are homeless for the first time, but this priority diminishes with age and length of time homeless.

The condition of homelessness compounds the decreased vitality that often accompanies age, resulting in serious health problems among nearly three-quarters of older homeless persons. Serious health disorders are reported two and a half times more frequently by chronically homeless individuals than by first-time homeless. Serious mental illness is reported by over half of chronically homeless individuals versus a fifth of first-time homeless.

Visible Homelessness

The most basic distinction in homeless dwelling places is between staying in a homeless shelter and residing on the street where one is visibly homeless. Reasons why homeless individuals may choose not to reside in emergency shelters include the lack of lasting solutions at the end of the shelter stay, particularly a source of income or housing after people reached the time limit for their program.

Children are the most likely to find refuge in a homeless shelter, followed by women, and then by non-chronically homeless individuals. Among the one-fifth of children who are unsheltered, half reside in vehicles. This means that on a

given night, the dwellings for 10 percent of homeless children are something less secure than an emergency shelter or a vehicle.

The long-term trend in the dwellings occupied by unsheltered individuals is that persons sleeping on sidewalks make up a decreasing share of homeless sightings; and tents and makeshift shelters make up an increasing share. There is a progression that accompanies age in the increasing share of unsheltered individuals who occupy tents and makeshift shelters.

Sleeping on sidewalks and alleys is most prevalent among youth 18–24 years of age, accounting for almost half of the locations where unsheltered youth spend the night.

Roughly a third of unsheltered homeless individuals live in a vehicle. However, the rate of vehicle occupancy drops by over half among individuals who have been homeless 12 months or longer. This may well be because the substantial cost of vehicle ownership is compounded by lack of legal parking places, parking tickets and vehicle impoundment.

In most cases, vehicles are the best dwelling option for unsheltered individuals. It is beneficial and cost-effective to help homeless individuals retain their vehicles. This strategy includes providing legal places to park together with sanitary facilities for occupants of the vehicles. It can also include assistance in paying vehicle registration and maintenance costs.

Justice System Involvement

One of the most consistent characteristics of homeless adults is a history of incarceration. Fifty-eight percent of unsheltered men 25 years of age or older and 42 percent of women report having been incarcerated. A third of reported stints of incarceration are in state prison and the other two-thirds in county jail.

Although three-quarters did not have juvenile records and the onset of involvement in the criminal justice system occurred as adults, adult incarceration foreshadows homelessness for half of men and a third of women.

Prolonged exposure to homelessness is associated with an increased rate of incarceration. The frequency of incarceration histories is a quarter again higher among chronically homeless men and half again higher among chronically homeless women than among those who are newly homeless.

Overall, homeless residents are involved in a very small share of crimes in the City of Los Angeles. They are suspects in roughly one out of 50 crimes and the victim in about one out of 100 crimes. The predominant type of police encounter for homeless residents has been loitering or sleeping in a public place, accounting for two-thirds of homeless arrests from 2010 through 2017.

Homeless residents' encounters with the police increase with age, peaking among individuals who are 45 to 54 years old. In contrast, non-homeless encounters with the police peak among individuals who are 25 to 34 years old and decrease thereafter. The higher frequency of justice system involvement among older homeless individuals appears to be associated with the duration of homelessness, since older people tend to have longer histories of homelessness.

Vehicles are the best dwelling option for unsheltered individuals.

Adult incarceration foreshadows homelessness.

This points to the importance of continuing and expanding interventions for homeless individuals while they are incarcerated and more readily accessible for services and discharge planning.

Families and Children

Homeless families are fragile. Half of all homeless women and a third of men report that they have children. Nearly a tenth of all homeless individuals 18 years of age and older are accompanied by a child, this includes nearly a fifth of women and a quarter as many men. Others have children in institutional care, and still others have children who have reached adulthood.

For every one homeless parent accompanied by a child, 1.5 parents have a child in institutional care. This includes one parent who has a child in foster care and slightly less than one parent who has a child in juvenile detention. Because some parents have children in both forms of institutional care, the ratio is one to 1.5.

Homelessness and institutional care are linked across generations. One-seventh of all homeless adults and nearly one-third of homeless youth 18 to 24 years of age, report that they were in foster care.

Youth-led households, that is, parents 18 to 24 years of age, make up a quarter of all homeless households with children. The share of young women in this age range who say they are pregnant is a third as large as those who have a child with them. These young parents still have the hope and energy of youth, yet are faltering in their transition to adulthood. They are an especially important group to support in obtaining jobs, subsidized childcare, and other needed assistance.

More homeless families are divided than remain intact. Given that many youth in institutional care are not successful in building a path to self-sufficient adulthood and are at risk of becoming second- or third-generation homeless, there is an important public interest in strengthening these families. This includes supporting parents in obtaining and keeping jobs, addressing behavioral health needs, and, when needed, developing successful parenting skills.

Work and Income

Efforts of homeless individuals to participate in the formal labor force are largely in the form of job seeking rather than job holding. The number of individuals looking for a job is four times greater than the number with a job.

Two-thirds of homeless adults report making efforts to generate an income, but as individuals age and are homeless for longer intervals, this effort shifts from the formal labor market to informal, economically marginal activities.

The major exceptions to this profile are young adults 18 to 24 years of age, parents with children, and individuals who have been homeless for three months or less. These three groups often overlap and are the low-hanging fruit for employment interventions.

Homeless workers rarely have full-time, year-round jobs, but if we annualize the monthly earnings of those who report having full-time work, their earnings are below the federal poverty threshold. Increasing the incomes of employable adults

Parents 18 to 24
years of age,
make up almost a
quarter of all
homeless
households with
children.

through jobs that pay at least the minimum wage is needed as a primary strategy for addressing homelessness.

Almost three-quarters of homeless adults report having at least a high school degree and one-quarter report some level of college education. This level of educational attainment typically enables individuals to be part of the labor force and consistently earn an income.

Given the massive ethnic disparities in homelessness, any employment-based intervention must address the discrimination and isolation that are barriers to sustaining employment for many African Americans, particularly men.

The entry of most homeless adults into sustaining jobs will need to be facilitated by strong financial incentives for employers to hire them and help them master their jobs. Other essential components of an integrated employment intervention include temporary housing, child care, transportation, clothing, behavioral health care, and interim income maintenance while waiting for a paycheck.

Considering that many of the people who are most interested in employment are parents, the multi-generational costs to society when those parents are marginalized and lack stability builds a strong case for the cost-effectiveness of targeted employment interventions. There are similarly strong cases for young adults and recently homeless individuals with employment histories.

The cost to society of a homeless family, including long-term adverse impacts on children, is likely to exceed the cost of underwriting jobs for parents.

Chronic Homelessness

The rate of chronic homelessness is roughly 30 percent for the total the point-in-time homeless population, but is progressively higher for older individuals.

Distinctive attributes of chronically homeless individuals include far fewer who are living with companions, accompanied by children, working, or looking for work. Every reported health condition is two to three times more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals than among first-time homeless.

Justice system histories are more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals. Two-thirds of chronically homeless men and half of chronically homeless women have been incarcerated.

Even though unequal social conditions create disproportionately large groups of homeless African-Americans and men, there are similar rates of chronic homelessness within each homeless ethnic and gender group. The risk of becoming chronically homeless is shared equally by all homeless individuals.

Efforts Already Underway

Most of the interventions recommended in this report are being piloted, but often as small scale, stand-alone efforts. To effectively combat chronic homelessness, interventions must be:

- Targeted to accurately prioritize individuals at high risk of chronic homelessness.

Interventions must be targeted, system-wide and expanded to scale.

- Integrated as system-wide responses rather than siloed in the homeless service provider system.
- Expanded to a scale that is proportional to the homeless crisis.

Los Angeles County's Office of Homeless Initiative identified the following initiatives that are already being implemented:

- *Prevention:* Housing retentions services are provided for families and individuals.
- *Vehicles and Hygiene Facilities:* Toilets and sinks have been deployed at four sites near encampments in unincorporated areas of the county and a pilot mobile shower program has been launched.
- *Homeless Families:* Family reunification housing subsidies are being provided.
- *Decriminalization:* The Sheriff has adopted a decriminalization policy and trained hundreds of officers in effective outreach and engagement strategies.
- *Youth:* Service coordination, rapid rehousing and crisis housing are being provided for transition age youth. Efforts are being made to avoid discharging foster and probation youth into homelessness.
- *Employment:* Efforts are underway to connect people experiencing homelessness with the workforce development system, provide subsidized employment, training, and job placement assistance. And individuals are being assisted in accessing their vital records.
- *Predictive Analytics:* The County is exploring analytic models to improve screening and targeting within the homeless service delivery system. Expanded data and information sharing will support efforts to link administrative records and more effectively target services.

The *Breaking Barriers* program in the County's Office of Diversion and Reentry is a system-wide effort that integrates health care and justice system resources. It provides case management, flexible housing and employment for jail inmates with mental health or substance use disorders. It has reduced recidivism and improved health outcomes by diverting inmates into community based treatment and supportive housing.

The County's *Subsidized Employment Program* for parents receiving cash aid pays parents' wages during their first six months in a job and should be targeted on homeless parents.

Recommendations

Develop and implement predictive analytic screening tools to prioritize and target interventions for new entrants into homelessness

1. *Newly Homeless At Greatest Risk of Chronic Homelessness:* Increase early and lasting exits from homelessness by using system-based screening tools to analyze linked administrative records from public and publicly-funded agencies for individuals who are newly homeless to identify those who are

most likely to become chronically homeless and target them for immediate assistance.

2. *Ongoing, Real-Time Linking of Client Records:* Implement system-based screening programs using linked administrative records for healthcare, social services, homeless services, employment, and justice system involvement for individuals experiencing homelessness to identify newly homeless individuals who are at risk of chronic homelessness and prioritize them for targeted assistance. Use the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as a tool for informing service providers about individuals who have been prioritized for targeted interventions.
3. *Prevent Homelessness:* When a reliable predictive model has been developed, screen precariously housed clients who interface with County systems to identify those at greatest risk of entering homelessness.
4. *Homeless Children:* Investigate the long-term outcomes for children who experience homelessness and develop a reliable predictive model for identifying those at great risk of lasting harm.

Integrate mainstream human service delivery organizations in combating homelessness

5. *System-Wide Engagement:* Integrate all mainstream housing, social service, health care, and employment organizations into integrated, comprehensive efforts to help homeless residents achieve permanent exits from homelessness.

Provide targeted interventions

6. *Vehicles as Dwelling Places:* Help homeless individuals retain their vehicles by providing legal places to park together with hygiene facilities for occupants of the vehicles. In addition, provide cost-effective levels of financial assistance for paying vehicle registration and maintenance costs.
7. *Family Support:* Provide services for strengthening homeless families and equipping parents to care for and nurture their children, both those accompanying them and those in institutional care. This includes supporting parents in obtaining and keeping jobs, addressing behavioral health needs, and, where needed, developing successful parenting skills. Reducing risk for this group will provide multi-generational reductions in social service needs.
8. *Shelter for Parents and Children:* Provide immediate housing for homeless parents who are pregnant or accompanied by children and their families.
9. *Justice System Diversion:* Use arrests and incarceration as the last resort in responding to the life circumstances and actions of homeless individuals because arrest and incarceration increase the number of chronically homeless individuals. Expand already successful diversion programs into community based treatment and housing.
10. *Transition Age Youth:* Expand efforts to assist young adults 18 to 24 years of age experiencing homelessness, particularly those exiting foster care and juvenile detention. Needed services include skill development,

employment, child care, behavioral health services, and integration into positive social networks.

11. *Job Training:* Improve access and suitability of education and job training opportunities for homeless individuals seeking employment who lack the skills needed to obtain a job.
12. *Employment:* Expand current efforts to place individuals experiencing homelessness in jobs. Attention should be focused on new entrants into homelessness, young adults, and individuals who are parents. Services should include subsidized employment, temporary housing, child care, mobile phones, bus passes, clothes suitable for job interviews, and assistance in obtaining identity documents. Federal and state funded employment programs should assume a central role in providing intensive and comprehensive employment services for homeless residents.

Next Steps

This meta-analysis of information about homelessness experienced in Los Angeles County frames issues to be addressed through direct services as well as research. Chronic homelessness is a catastrophe and the result of multiple failures, both before and after the onset of homelessness. The next stage of Economic Roundtable research is focused on developing predictive analytic screening tools.

Linked administrative records from client contacts with public social service and law enforcement agencies are being used to identify and stop this cascade of failures. These linked records reveal the course of individuals' lives.

We are analyzing 15 years of linked records of individuals who experienced homelessness to identify factors associated with a high probability of becoming chronically homeless. These predictive factors can then be used to screen records of individuals who are newly homeless to identify those who are most likely to become chronically homeless and target them for immediate assistance.

The predictive screening tools will identify people for whom the escape route from homelessness costs less than the problem of remaining homeless.

These are homeless individuals likely to have high future costs for public services if there is not an intervention. They are also likely to have reductions in public costs after the intervention that offset the cost of the intervention. This type of predictive tool has already been developed to prioritize chronically homeless individuals for access to the scarce supply of permanent supportive housing. The new work will expand the array of evidence-driven interventions to include employment and services for foster youth.

Predictive
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Precarious Housing

Overview

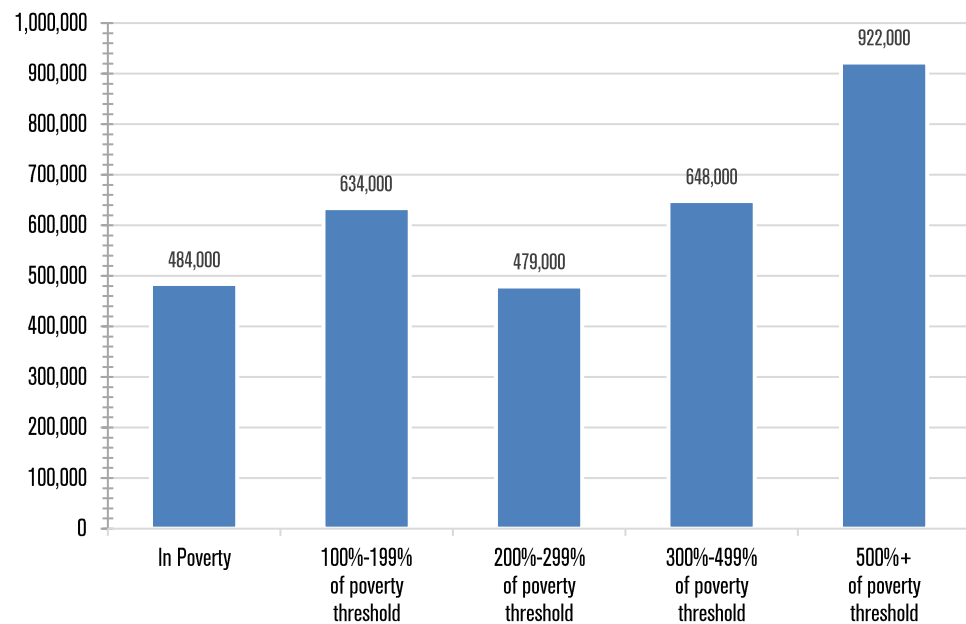
The attributes of people experiencing homelessness change if they remain homeless. Poverty and inability to pay for housing may be the precipitating cause for becoming homeless. Over time, however, social disconnection and health problems emerge as increasingly formidable barriers to escaping homelessness.

We put forward six broad themes in this report.

- *First*, the total population that experiences homelessness over the course of a year is far larger than the chronically homeless population.
- *Second*, increasing the already large number of people who quickly exit homelessness will stem the flow of people into chronic homelessness.
- *Third*, social, medical, legal, and economic wreckage accumulates on the path to chronic homelessness. This accumulation of new impediments makes it ever more difficult and costly to exit homelessness.
- *Fourth*, most homeless adults want to support themselves through work. This goal is strongest and most feasible among new entrants into homelessness, making it viable as an effective early intervention.
- *Fifth*, new screening tools are needed to differentiate among newly homeless individuals to identify those who are at high risk of going on to become chronically homeless and prioritize them for early intervention.
- *Sixth*, Homelessness results from system-wide failures and requires system-wide engagement. Homeless agencies can't solve this problem alone.

The different attributes of newly and long-term homeless individuals are described by Mitchell Katz: “There is no single reason that people become homeless.

Figure 1: Number of Los Angeles County Families in Income Groups Based on Poverty Threshold



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, County of Los Angeles, 2011-2015. Individuals in Group Quarters excluded. Data includes both families and one-person households, and represents income over the past year.

However, it is useful to distinguish those whose homelessness is a function primarily of economic forces (typically the recently homeless) and those who have a range of mental health and addiction problems in addition to economic issues (typically the chronically homeless).”¹

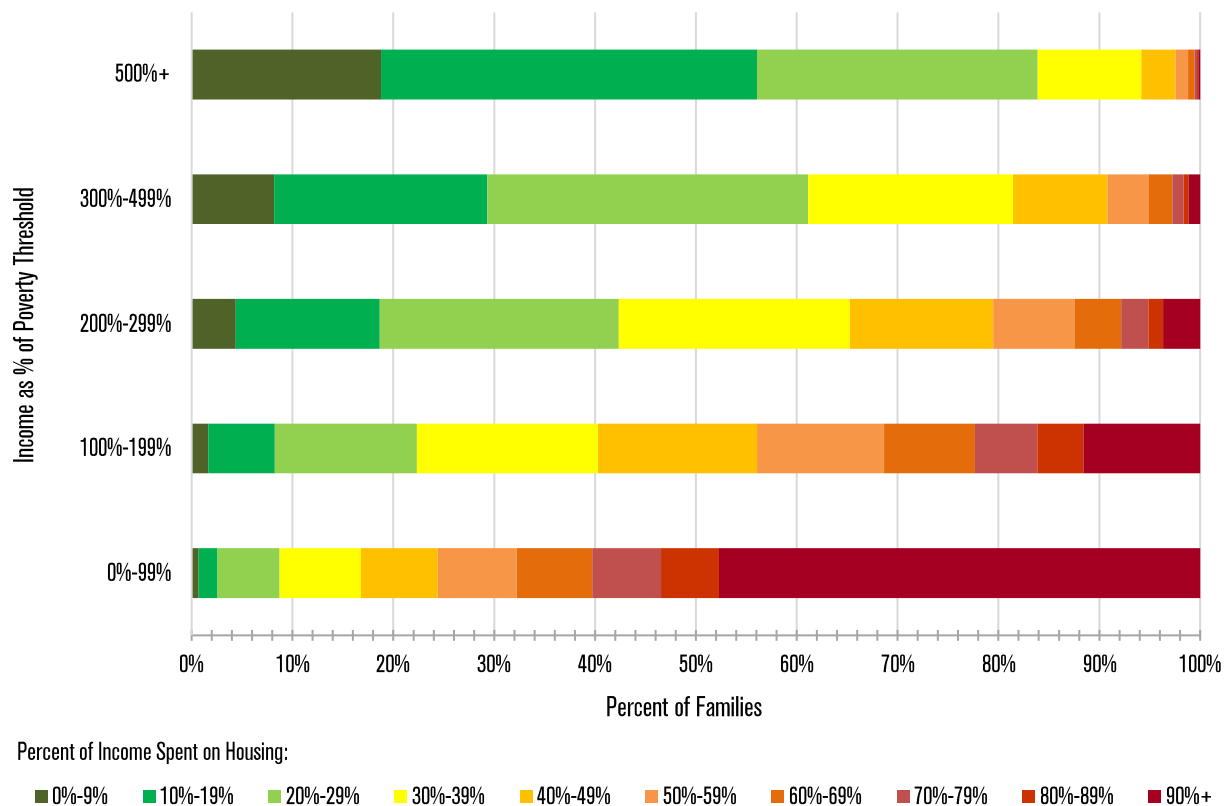
Precarious Housing

Poverty is the seedbed of homelessness and the universal characteristic of individuals who are homeless. Roughly 484,000 families and one-person households in Los Angeles County live in poverty, as shown in *Figure 1*. This represents 15 percent of the 3,166,000 households in the county, after excluding individuals classified by the Census Bureau as living in group quarters—a category that includes homeless persons.²

Poverty is not a stable condition. Individuals with the lowest incomes experience more income volatility than individuals with higher incomes.³ Volatility results from unstable employment and fluctuation in public benefits and other sources of support. Because their income is both small and unpredictable, many poor families have only a tenuous ability to meet continuing financial obligations such as rent payments.

Half of families in poverty spend 90% or more of their income on housing.

Figure 2: Percent of Income Spent for Housing by Family Income



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, County of Los Angeles, 2011-2015. Individuals in Group Quarters excluded. Data includes both renters and owners, and is for families and one-person households.

With over half a million impoverished people on the cusp of homelessness, it is realistic to anticipate that a significant share will become homeless.

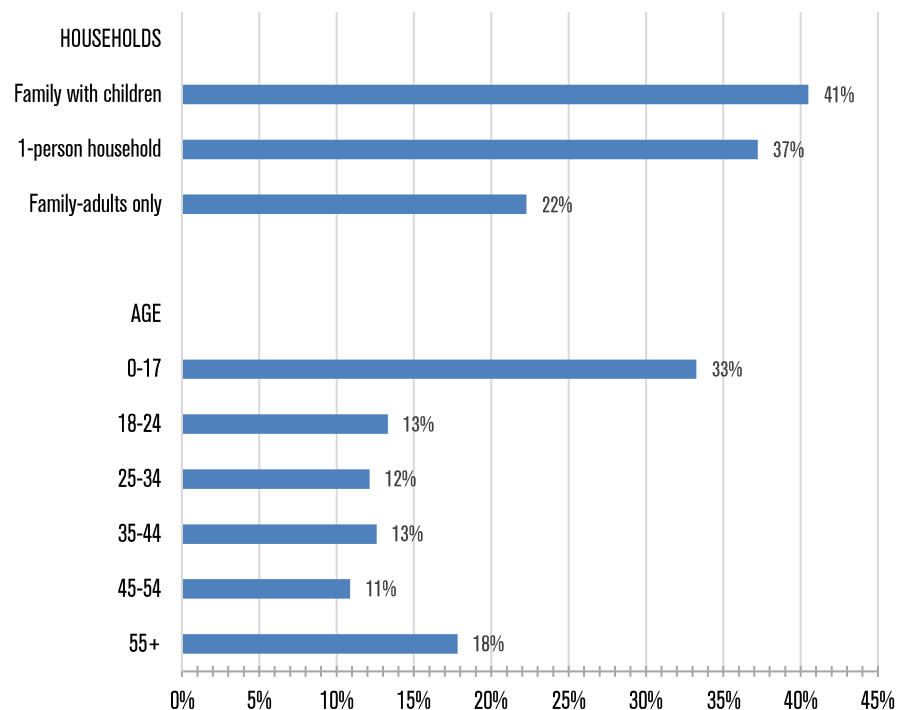
In addition to poverty, high rental rates are a region-wide force contributing to housing unaffordability and homelessness in Los Angeles County.

The share of income that families in poverty, as well as those with higher incomes, spend on housing is shown in *Figure 2*. It is astounding and disturbing that half of families in poverty (48 percent) spend 90 percent or more of their income on housing. Even if these families receive food stamps (now called CalFresh) and have health coverage through Medi-Cal, spending nine-tenths of family income for shelter signifies a desperate effort to avoid homelessness.

This enormous strain to pay for housing is most prevalent among families in poverty. In the next highest income group, with incomes ranging from just-above poverty to twice the poverty threshold, 12 percent of families pay 90 percent or more of their income for housing. This share drops to four percent for families with incomes two to three times the poverty threshold, one percent for families with incomes three to four times the poverty threshold, and 0.2 percent for families with incomes five or more times the poverty threshold.

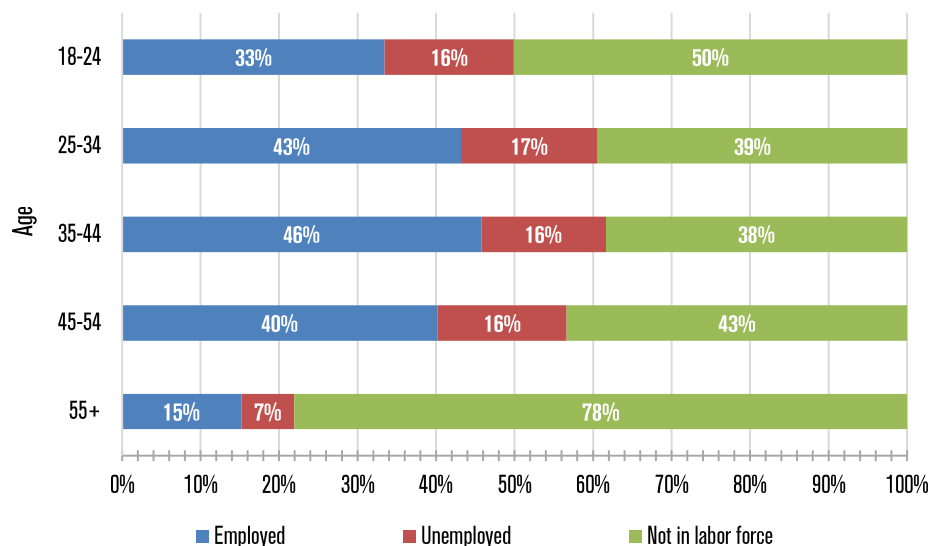
Almost a quarter of a million families and one-person households (231,000) are in poverty and spending 90 percent or more of their income for housing. There are over half a million individuals in these families and households (594,000 people). These precariously housed individuals are on the cusp of homelessness. Eviction may be as close as one missed rent payment. This may be followed by couch surfing with relatives or friends, and when hospitality is unavailable, living in a car, going into a shelter or living on the street. Individuals in poverty who had been paying 90 percent or more of their income for housing make up a significant share of the homeless population.

Figure 3: Household Structure and Age of Precariously Housed Individuals



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, County of Los Angeles, 2011-2015. Individuals in Group Quarters excluded.

Figure 4: Employment Status of Precariously Housed Individuals by Age



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, County of Los Angeles, 2011-2015. Individuals in Group Quarters excluded.

With over half a million impoverished people on the cusp of homelessness, it is realistic to anticipate that a significant share will become homeless over the course of a year. The household structure and age of these individuals is shown in *Figure 3*. The largest share of households (41 percent) include children, 37 percent are single adults, and 22 percent include two or more adults.

A third of the individuals are children, 18 percent are 55 years of age or older, and half (49 percent) are working age (18–54).

Sixty percent of impoverished and precariously housed adults 25 to 54 years of age are employed or looking for work, as shown in *Figure 4*. Labor force participation among individuals 55 years of age and older drops sharply to 22 percent. Overall, a majority of near-homeless adults are attempting to support themselves through work.

60% of impoverished and precariously housed adults 25 to 54 years of age are employed or looking for work.

Unaffordable Housing

Unaffordable housing is equally the result lack of affordable and market rate housing and inadequate incomes. The homelessness we see today has grown out of a tangle of problems related to housing access.

Inability to afford housing is the result of an inadequate inventory of affordable housing, an insufficient number of jobs in the regional economy, and insufficient public income assistance to fill the gap between income and basic living costs. Half of the families in Los Angeles County (49 percent) are not burdened by the cost of their housing—they pay less than 30 percent of their income for housing. Most who are not cost-burdened have large enough incomes to make housing affordable. One-fifth of these unburdened households have owned their homes long enough to have paid off their mortgage.

Three region-wide forces have contributed to housing unaffordability and homelessness in Los Angeles County.

1. *Economic Restructuring*: Defense cutbacks in the early 1990s led to the collapse of Los Angeles County's aerospace industry and a net out-migration of 1.1 million residents. The county lost 400,000 aerospace jobs and apparel became the primary manufacturing sector. Aerospace paid middle-class wages to workers with high school diplomas. Apparel paid only half as much. This led to a hollowing out of the middle class and rapid income polarization that foreshadowed similar trends nationwide.
2. *Economic Stagnation*: In 2015, Los Angeles County finally recovered the number of jobs it had in its formal 1990 economy, but during that time the labor force grew 11 percent. There was and continues to be a scarcity of jobs in general, and particularly jobs that pay living wages.
3. *Lack of New Housing*: Weak household buying power (combined with expensive land and highly regulated land use) resulted in very low levels of housing construction. This contributed to housing prices that rose faster than incomes and a growing scarcity of affordable housing.

Two additional factors that are specific to homelessness contributed to the growth of homelessness:

4. *Emergency Services Available but Quarantined*: Compared to the rest of Southern California, Skid Row has long been a service-rich environment for the homeless. Cities throughout Southern California transported their homeless to Skid Row as a matter of policy. While services were available in Skid Row, exits from homelessness were scarce. It has been a contained environment. This began to change in 2014, when the county's Housing for Health program started offering permanent supportive housing to homeless individuals who were frequent patients in county health care system.
5. *Criminalization of Homelessness*: As homelessness grew, there was a distinct absence of solutions through housing or employment, and the primary governmental tool was police action to both contain homelessness and prevent permanent anchors in specific locations. Police citations for loitering or sleeping in a public place grew rapidly through 2013, and then were curtailed by litigation on behalf of the homeless. Justice system involvement further marginalized homeless individuals and created an added barrier to exiting homelessness.

These problems have contributed to a large population of aging, disabled homeless individuals and continue to contribute to a flow of new entrants into homelessness. Those least favored in this lottery of scarcity become chronically homeless.

Success in Avoiding Homelessness

Los Angeles is the national epicenter of homelessness,⁴ but, given how many people are precariously housed, it's remarkable that so few become homeless. In 2017, the estimated point-in-time homeless population in all communities of Los Angeles County was 57,794 people.⁵ This represents about 10 percent of the population that is in poverty and spending 90 percent or more of their income for

housing. This is the seedbed of homelessness, although individuals with higher incomes and less rent burden also become homeless.

Using this impoverished population with extreme rent burden as a proxy for the overall population at risk of homelessness, we get a rough sense of the share of people at acute risk of homelessness who actually become homeless, and the payoff from achieving small increases in the share that succeeds in averting homelessness. Based on this conservative model that understates the number of people on the brink of homelessness, on a given day, over 90 percent of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable residents succeed against very difficult odds in remaining housed.

Given that there is at least a ten-to-one ratio in the number of people on the cusp of homelessness to the number who are actually homeless, increasing the rate of success in avoiding homelessness by 1 percentage point will reduce occurrences of homelessness by at least 10 percent. This can be achieved by augmenting the resources people already use to remain housed:

- *Employment*—most people are working or trying to find work.
- *Income Support*—many families receive cash aid and CalFresh.
- *Housing Support*—some people live in subsidized housing, others have landlords who tolerate late rent payments or minimize rent increases.
- *Personal Networks*—families and friends allow couch surfing.
- *Social Services*—individuals receive help in solving problems that are barriers to self-sufficiency or to remaining housed.
- *Kindness of Others*—caring individuals ranging from teachers to health providers to neighbors provide help.

If 1% more
precariously
housed individuals
avoid
homelessness, the
homeless
population will
shrink 10%.

Other Solutions Besides Housing

While housing is clearly crucial, in the near-term, we will not build our way out of homelessness. We need other, less costly solutions, which come in the form of well-targeted early interventions. There are at least four reasons why housing is not feasible as the primary solution to homelessness.

First, housing for formerly homeless individuals is very costly. The monthly rent that a formerly homeless person receiving SSI benefits of \$900 a month can afford to pay will amortize about \$35,000 in mortgage costs, based on estimates by Yasmin Tong Consulting.⁶ The remainder of the roughly \$335,000 cost for building or purchasing that individual's housing unit must be subsidized.⁷ This means that a subsidy of \$5.25 billion is required to build enough housing for a point-in-time population of 17,500 chronically homeless individuals—the countywide estimate from the 2017 homeless count.⁸ This does not include additional costs for supportive services.

Second, the population with top-priority needs for deeply subsidized housing is larger than just chronically homeless individuals, expanding the scope of financing and logistical challenges. Additional high-need groups include youth transitioning out of the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and homeless families with children.

Third, even when subsidy funds are available, as they are now from Los Angeles City Measure HHH, Los Angeles County Measure H, and California’s “No Place Like Home” initiative, the pace of construction is slow because of neighborhood resistance to homeless housing projects.

Fourth, there is a steady flow of new individuals into chronic homelessness, continually adding to the point-in-time population in need of housing.

The alternative that will reduce some of the need for housing is to prevent individuals from becoming chronically homeless in the first place. This report identifies some of those opportunities.

Approach

This report is a meta-analysis of 26 point-in-time data sets from 3 sources about homelessness in Los Angeles County. These data sets are listed in the following Methodology section. We looked for the common ground within these multiple snapshots of homeless residents to build a population profile based on corroborating evidence.

The primary source of information is homeless counts conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority from 2005 to 2017, which provide 19 of the data sets we used. Demographic surveys of unsheltered individuals in the seven counts from 2007 through 2017 and more recently available Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) records for individuals in emergency shelters during the four counts from 2011 through 2017 were the most valuable sources of information. In an earlier report ([*Who Counts?*](#)) we discussed issues related to the year-to-year comparability of homeless count data.

Whenever possible we combined data from multiple years to increase the reliability of the data. This is important because there is significant variation from one count to the next in the profile of homeless residents provided by the demographic survey. It is also important because the demographic survey captures a larger share of chronically homeless individuals while HMIS data captures a larger share of families and children.

Our method of combining the data is described in the following Methodology section.

Summary

Almost 600,000 Los Angeles County residents are in poverty and spend 90 percent or more of their income on housing. However, on any given day, over 90 percent of these extremely precariously housed individuals succeed in avoiding homelessness through employment, public assistance, housing support, help from friends and relatives, social services, and the generosity of people in their lives.

Each one percentage point increase in the success rate of precariously housed individuals avoiding homelessness will reduce the number of people who become homeless by at least 10 percent. This can be achieved by strengthening the tools precariously housed people already use to remain housed.

The largest share of households on the cusp of homelessness (41 percent) include children.

Sixty percent of impoverished and precariously housed adults 25 to 54 years of age are employed or looking for work. Employment is an important tool for preventing and ending homelessness.

Inability to afford housing is the result both of an inadequate inventory of affordable housing and an insufficient number of jobs in the regional economy that pay living wages. Three region-wide forces over the past three decades have contributed to the current state of housing unaffordability and homelessness in Los Angeles County: deindustrialization and the subsequent economic restructuring that hollowed out the middle class; 25 years of economic stagnation without job growth; and lack of new housing construction.

Two additional factors contributed to the growth of homelessness. Until recently, homelessness was quarantined in Skid Row, where emergency services were available but exits from homelessness were scarce. In addition, until recently, the primary governmental tool for addressing homelessness was police action to both contain homeless individuals and prevent permanent anchors in specific locations. Justice system involvement further marginalizes homeless individuals and creates an added barrier to exiting homelessness.

It is crucial to build affordable housing for homeless individuals, but this is only feasible as part of a broad strategy that includes effective early intervention for individuals at high risk of becoming chronically homeless. Limitations on housing include very high subsidy costs—as much as \$300,000 per unit, neighborhood resistance to homeless housing projects, and a continuing flow of new individuals into chronic homelessness.

In parallel with building affordable housing, it is necessary to reduce the flow of new individuals into chronic homelessness. This can be achieved through systems-based tools that use records of individuals entering homelessness to identify those who are at high risk of becoming chronically homeless and targeting them for rapid, effective interventions, including employment.

Methodology

This report draws on 26 data sources, 19 of which are from homeless counts conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017. This includes street count data from all counts, demographic survey data for unsheltered persons from the seven most recent counts, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data for sheltered persons from the four most recent counts. Results from these data sets are pooled in this report.

Other sources of information are: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples for 2010–14 and 2011–15, U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015, Bureau of Sanitation, City of Los Angeles service requests 2016, Los Angeles Police Department Open Data web site, Los Angeles County Office of Education Homeless Education Update 2015–16, and California Department of Education Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, Homeless K–12 Students per School 2015–16.

The most valuable source of information is the homeless counts conducted by LAHSA, however, there is significant variation among counts in attributes ascribed to the homeless population. This limitation is discussed in the Economic Roundtable report, *Who Counts? Assessing Accuracy of L.A.'s Homeless Count*, 2017, <https://economicrt.org/publication/>. This analysis addresses this problem by pooling data from multiple counts whenever possible, rather than relying on a single count. A strength of the homeless count data is that often the same variable and outcome definitions are used, or can be generated, across many data sets.

The purpose of this meta-analysis is to systematically combine relevant data from multiple sources to develop a unified description of the population experiencing homelessness that has greater reliability than data from a single source. The number of data sets that provide information about specific issues varies. There are differences in the information collected by the demographic survey and HMIS system, and changes from one count to the next in what data is collected. Throughout this report, all data sets that provide relevant and compatible information were used. Each chart in this report lists the data sources used.

The issue of how to weight data arises in pooling data from HMIS records for shelter residents with the demographic survey of the unsheltered population. Demographic survey data includes more chronically homeless individuals, while HMIS data includes more families and children. Together, the two sources of data provide a more complete and representative description of the homeless population. Whenever possible both demographic survey and HMIS data were used.

Beginning in 2013, there have been 11,000 to 14,000 HMIS records provided by HMIS for the sheltered population during the month of January in each count year, and 3,200 to 5,800 responses by unsheltered individuals to the demographic survey in each count.

Although the HMIS data represents a smaller population than the demographic survey of the street population, it is drawn from the entire population rather than the sample reached through the demographic survey. The analysis of homeless count data in the “*Who Counts?*” report showed that there is strong continuity from one count to the next in the HMIS data, but significant unexplained count-to-count fluctuation in the demographic survey data.

Unsheltered persons are estimated to make up roughly two-thirds of the point-in-time homeless population and sheltered persons one-third. The breakout of sheltered and unsheltered persons in 2009 to 2017 homeless counts was:

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017	Average
Unsheltered	67%	63%	64%	70%	73%	74%	69%
Sheltered	33%	37%	36%	30%	27%	26%	31%

To combine demographic survey and HMIS data, we computed the average of the percentage distributions for records from counts in each of the two data sets with information about an issue, and then combined these two averages, giving 69 percent weight to the demographic survey average and 31 percent weight to HMIS average.

It is our assessment that results presented in the report are more representative when they include both HMIS and demographic survey data, and less susceptible to measurement error when based on multiple years of demographic survey data.



Attributes of Homeless Residents

Homeless Demographics

The average *age* distribution of sheltered and unsheltered individuals identified in homeless counts from 2013 through 2017 is shown in *Figure 5*.

The age profile of homeless individuals differs most from the age distribution of precariously housed individuals shown earlier in *Figure 3* in that there is a far smaller share of children (3 vs. 33 percent).

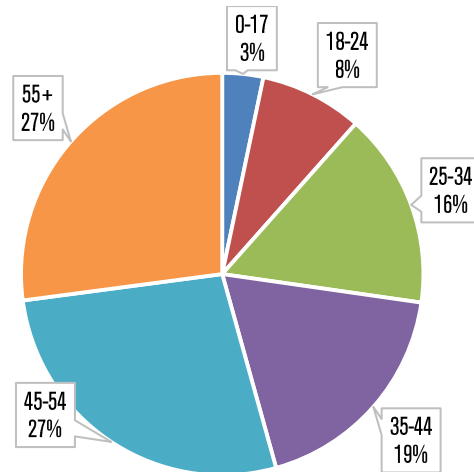
This suggests that homeless families with children are difficult to identify and enumerate, and may make up a larger share of homeless persons than has been identified in homeless counts.

African-Americans are the largest *ethnic* group among homeless residents, making up an average of 44 percent of the population, as shown in *Figure 6*. Latinos are next largest (26 percent), followed by European-Americans (23 percent).

Other ethnicities including Asian-Americans, Native-Americans and individuals with multiple ethnic identities make up seven percent.

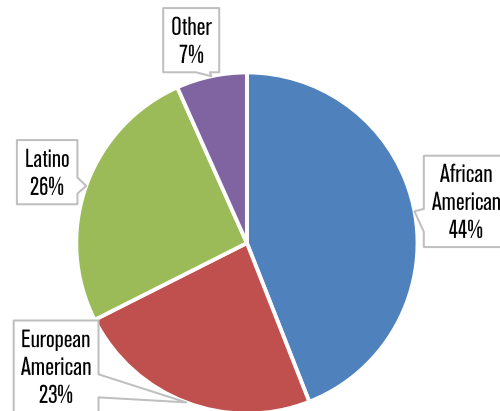
Males are the largest *gender* group, making up 70 percent of homeless residents, as shown in *Figure 7*. Females make up 29 percent, and transgender individuals one percent.

Figure 5: Age of Homeless Individuals



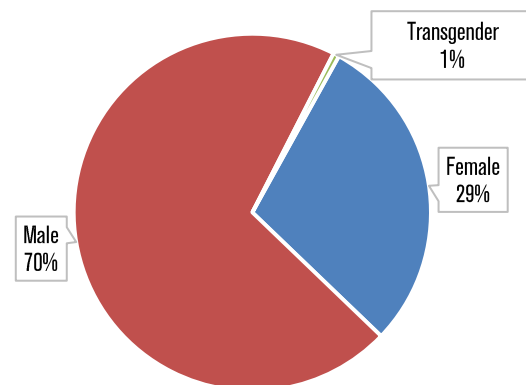
Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys and HMIS data for 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Figure 6: Ethnicity of Homeless Individuals



Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys and HMIS data for 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Figure 7: Gender of Homeless Individuals



Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys and HMIS data for 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Homeless families with children are difficult to identify and enumerate.

Homeless Residents Compared to the Overall Population

A composite demographic snapshot of Los Angeles County homeless residents compiled from homeless counts in 2007 through 2017 is shown in *Figure 8*. This multi-year average smooths out year-to-year fluctuation in the data to provide a profile of the point-in-time population identified and surveyed at the time of the annual count, which is compared to the overall population living in communities served by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Continuum of Care.⁹ Both populations are broken out by ethnicity, gender and age.¹⁰ Homeless count data probably under-reports homeless children, otherwise this multi-year composite profile plausibly represents people experiencing homelessness on a given day.¹¹

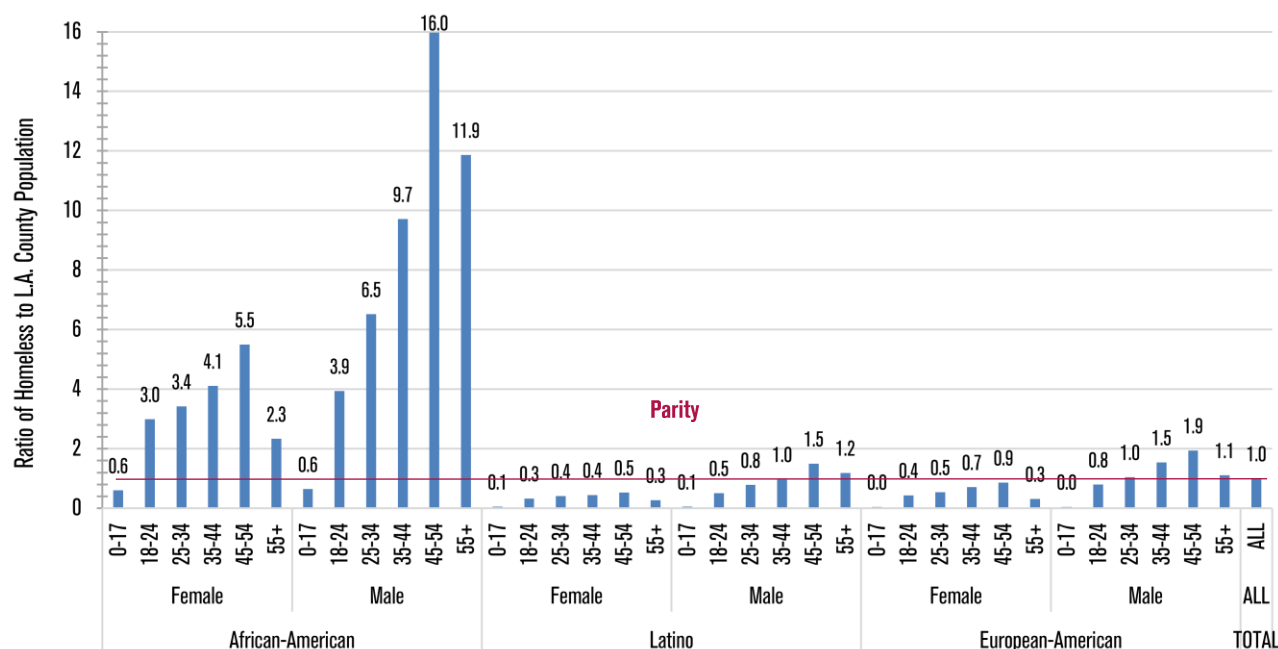
The parity marker in *Figure 8* identifies the point at which the share of the homeless population accounted for by an ethnicity-gender-age group is the same as their share of the total population in Los Angeles County. Groups whose population share rises above this line are over-represented among people experiencing homelessness.

The most striking outcome shown in *Figure 8* is the over-representation of older African-American men among people experiencing homelessness. African-American men 45 to 54 years of age are 16 times more prevalent among homeless residents than in the overall population. Homeless African-American men 35 to 44 years of age are almost 10 times more prevalent and those 55 or older are almost 12 times more prevalent than in the overall population.

Latino men tend to be under-represented among homeless individuals, with their homeless rate increasing to parity (same share of the homeless population as of the

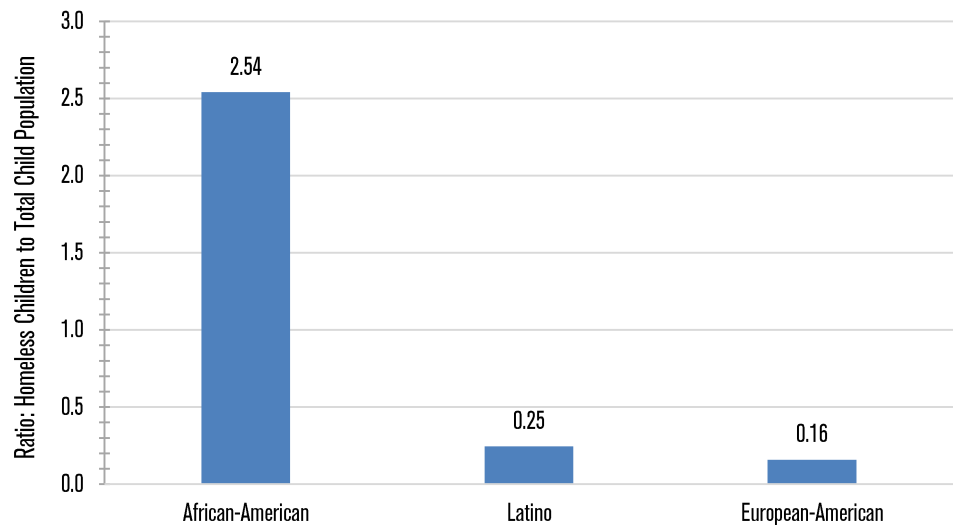
African-American men 45 to 54 years of age are 16 times more prevalent among homeless residents than in the overall population.

Figure 8: Ratio of Each Group's Share of the Homeless Population to their Share of the Total Population in LAHSA's Continuum of Care



Sources: Weighted average of demographic surveys 2009-2017 and HMIS data 2013-2017; general population data is from the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010-2014. Ethnic groups shown represent 83 percent of general population and 88 percent of homeless population.

Figure 9: Ratio of Homeless Children to Total Population of Children by Ethnicity



Sources: Weighted Average of 2017 demographic survey, and HMIS data 2013-2017; general population data is from the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010-2014.

overall population) among men 35 to 44 years of age or older and exceeding parity for men 45 years or older. The pattern is similar for European-American men, who exceed parity after 35 years of age and have a rate of homelessness that is almost double their share of the overall population for those 45 to 54 years old.

Men are more than twice as likely as women to experience homelessness. They make up 70 percent of the homeless population but just 49 percent of the general population—a ratio of 1.4, whereas women make up 51 percent of the general population and 29 percent of the homeless population—a ratio of 0.6.

Rates of homelessness are three times greater than parity for African-American women 18 to 34 years of age. This increases to four times parity by age 35 and over five times parity for women 45 to 54 years of age. Latinas have rates of homelessness that are half or less of parity. European-American women have slightly higher rates of homelessness, but their rates also remain below parity for all age groups.

Children identified in homeless counts make up a smaller share of the homeless population than of the overall population, but risk varies greatly based on ethnicity. African-American boys and girls 0 to 17 years of age are extremely over-represented among children experiencing homelessness, as shown in *Figure 9*. The rate of homelessness for African-American children is 10 times greater than the rate for Latino children and 16 times greater than the rate for European-American children.

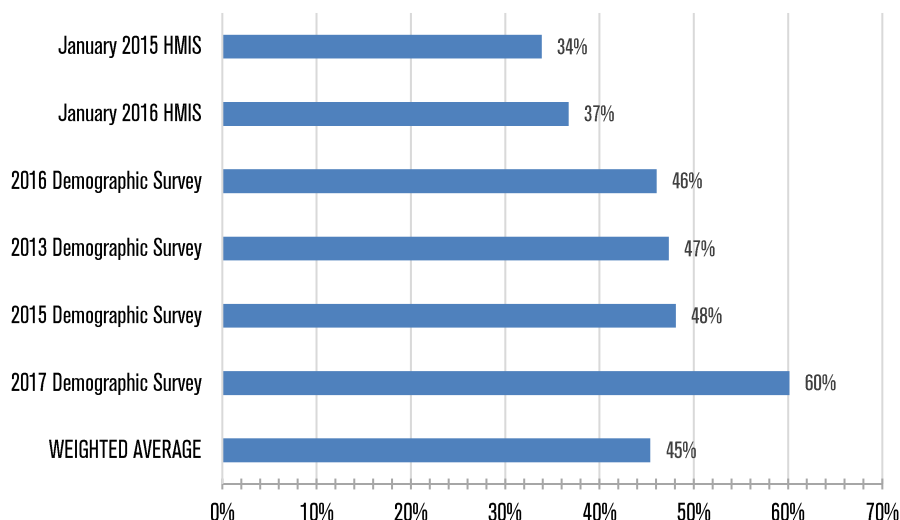
The ethnically disproportionate burden of homelessness among African-American adults begins in childhood.

New Entrants into Homelessness

Information about new entrants into homelessness and the length of time that people have been homeless is important for understanding the window of opportunity for intervening early after the onset of homelessness. Differing

The ethnically disproportionate burden of homelessness among African American adults begins in childhood.

Figure 10: Percent Homeless for the First Time



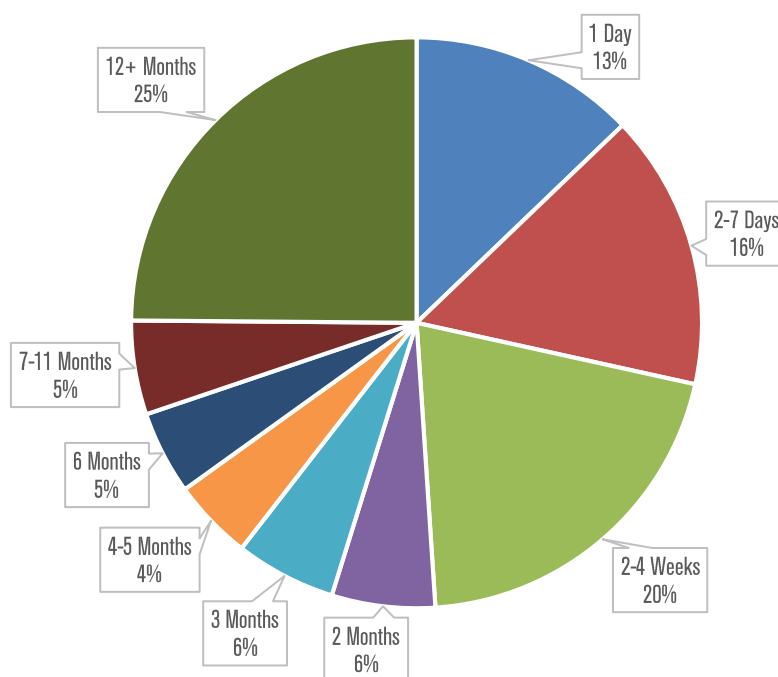
Sources: Weighted average of demographic surveys 2013-2017 and HMIS data 2015-2016.

durations of exposure to homelessness represent differing degrees of connection to the labor market, families, and possibilities for affording housing without deep public subsidies.

Forty-five percent of the individuals experiencing homelessness on a given day are estimated to be homeless for the first time, as shown in *Figure 10*. This estimate is based on four sources of data collected by LAHSA, which show variation around this average, ranging from a high of 60 percent to a low of 34 percent. These

49% of first-time homeless residents are estimated to be in their first month of homelessness.

Figure 11: Months Homeless in Past 3 Years for First-time Homeless Shelter Residents



Sources: Average of LAHSA HMIS data for January 2015 and 2016. Data is for individuals residing in shelters who were homeless for the first time.

variations are more likely to result from sampling differences and biases in self-reported data than changes in the composition of the homeless population, however they provide outside parameters for the proportion that is first-time homeless.

The two data sets with the most detailed breakouts of the duration of individuals' first homeless stint are from Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data for 2015 and 2016. This information about the duration of homelessness is shown in *Figure 11*. By duration, we mean how long the homeless stint had lasted at the time the individual was interviewed rather than the total length of time that elapsed before the individual exited homelessness.

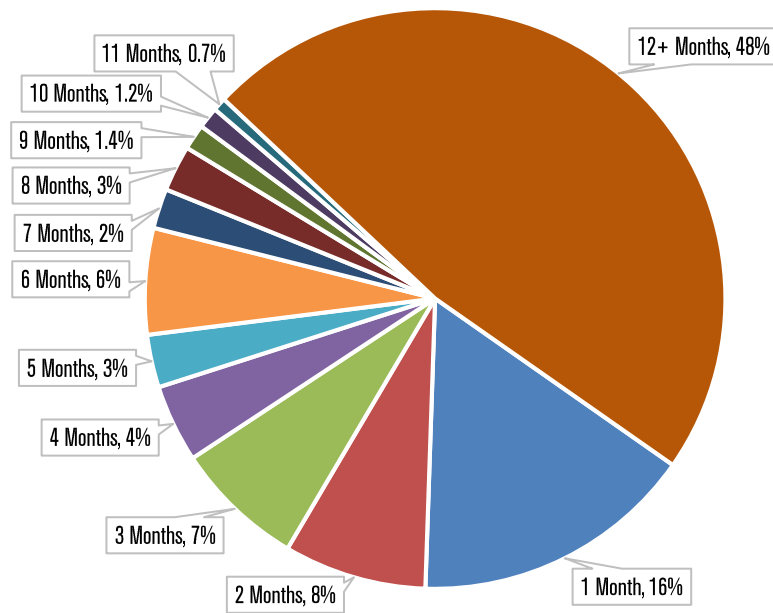
Thirteen percent of shelter residents who are homeless for the first time are reported to be in their first day of homelessness, 29 percent are in their first week, and 49 percent are in their first month.

Assuming that roughly half of the homeless individuals encountered in Los Angeles County are homeless for the first time, this means that on a given day, almost a quarter of all homeless individuals are in their first month, and one-eighth are in their first week, of homelessness.

Duration of Homelessness for the Point-in-Time Population

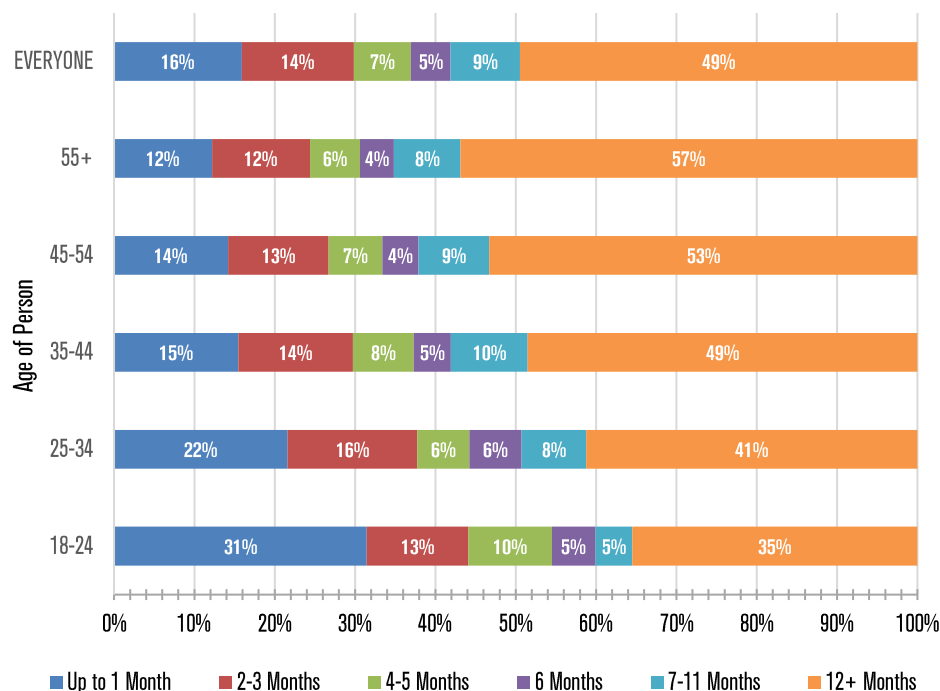
Almost a third of homeless individuals finding refuge in homeless shelters have been homeless for three months or less during the past three years, as shown in *Figure 12*. Slightly more than a fifth have been homeless for 4 to 11 months. And almost half have been homeless for 12 or more months.

Figure 12: Number of Months Homeless in the Past 3 Years for All Shelter Residents



Sources: Average of LAHSA HMIS data for January 2016 and 2017. Data is for individuals residing in shelters.

Figure 13: Duration of Current Homeless Episode of Unsheltered Individuals by Age



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2013, 2016, 2017. Data is for unsheltered individuals 18 and older.

For unsheltered individuals, the duration of homelessness increases with age, as shown in *Figure 13*. Among homeless adults encountered on a given day who are 18 to 24 years of age, 31 percent are shown to have been homeless for one month or less. This proportion shrinks to 12 percent for individuals 55 years of age or older.

Duration of Homelessness within the Annual Homeless Population

There is a strong suggestion in the data that many people experience short stints of homelessness and then manage to find an exit. This has important operational implications. It suggests that there is more diversity among people experiencing homelessness and often greater capacity to find an exit than is commonly appreciated. It also points to the challenge facing service providers in differentiating among clients whose needs and capacities often differ greatly.

An individual who is homeless for a year has 365 times more exposure to the public and to service providers than a person who is homeless for a day, and is more likely to be seen as the face of homelessness. Yet, there is a first day of homelessness for individuals who go on to become chronically homeless. There is far less social, medical and legal wreckage in their lives after a day than there is after a year, and greater likelihood that interventions less costly than permanently subsidized housing will enable them to escape homelessness.

It is critical to understand how many people experience short periods of homelessness over the course of a year. However, those who are homeless for only a short period of time are most difficult to enumerate through point-in-time

There is a first day of homelessness for individuals who go on to become chronically homeless.

Table 1: Hypothetical Size and Composition of Annual Population Experiencing Homelessness Based on Applying Available Data to Point-in-Time Population of 50,000 Persons

Total Duration of Homelessness	Observed Percent Duration of Homelessness in Truncated HMIS Data	Estimated Percent of Each Monthly Cohort Exiting by End of Month	Percent of Annual Homeless Population	Number of People in Annual Homeless Population	Multiplier
1 Month	16%	67%	48%	66,165	8.4
2 Months	8%	50%	13%	17,639	4.4
3 Months	7%	50%	7%	9,978	2.8
4 Months	4%	33%	3%	4,014	2.0
5 Months	3%	33%	2%	3,030	2.0
6 Months	6%	33%	2%	2,910	1.0
7 Months	2%	25%	1%	1,753	1.8
8 Months	3%	25%	1%	1,598	1.1
9 Months	1.4%	25%	1%	1,349	1.9
10 Months	1.2%	25%	1%	1,139	1.9
11 Months	0.7%	25%	1%	933	2.7
12+ Months	48%	-	19%	26,452	1.1
Total	100%	-	100%	136,960	-

Sources: Average of LAHSA HMIS data for January 2015 and 2016, and Economic Roundtable annual scenario.

counts. Furthermore, nearly all available data on durations of homelessness is truncated, meaning that it conveys duration of homelessness only up to the time of data collection.

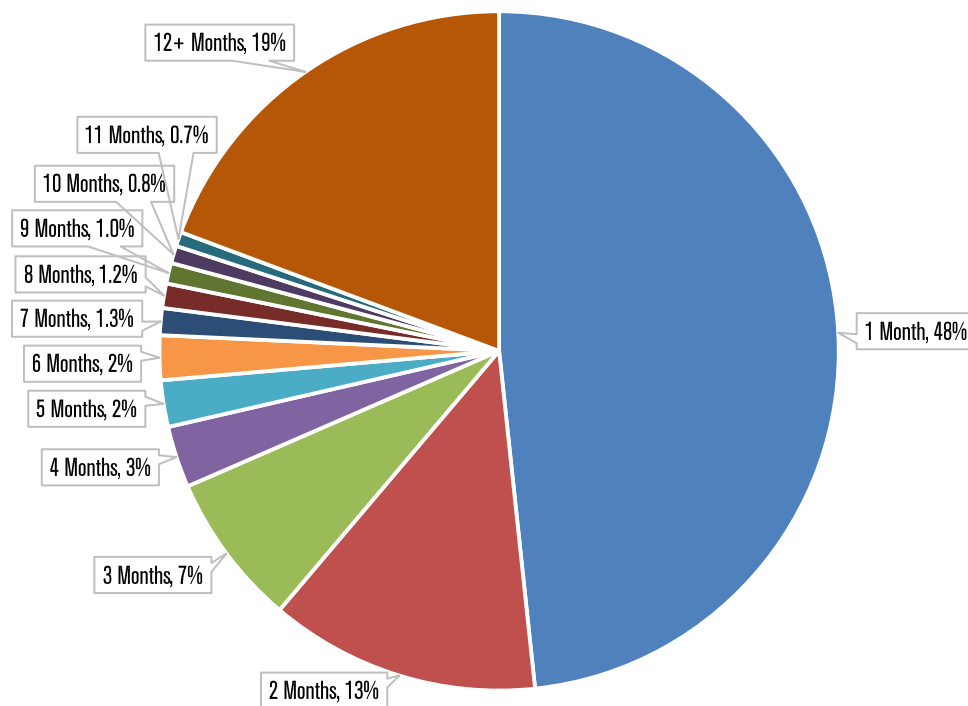
Given the importance of understanding the composition of the annual population that experiences homelessness, we have used the available data to construct a hypothetical estimate, which is shown in *Figure 14*. The annual homeless population is an estimate of the total number of people who are homeless for any period of time over the course of one year.

The population of shelter residents for whom information on duration of homelessness was available was broken out into monthly cohorts. The one-month cohort includes people who were homeless one month or less, the two-month cohort includes people who were homeless more than one month and up to two months, and so on. The 12-month cohort includes people who were homeless 12 or more months. Projections of the persistence of homelessness for each monthly cohort are shown in *Table 1*.

The most important result from this scenario is that 48 percent of the annual homeless population is projected to be homeless for one month or less.

48% of the annual homeless population is projected to be homeless for one month or less.

Figure 14: Annual Homeless Population Scenario Based on Duration of Homelessness



Sources: Average of LAHSA HMIS data for January 2015 and 2016. Data is annualized based on population turnover for each monthly cohort. Each label shows total duration of homelessness and estimated percent of annual population.

This estimate should be treated as a starting point for examining the larger question, and leaves much room for refinement. Important points regarding the interpretation and methodology of *Table 1* and *Figure 14* are explained in the accompanying box titled “Method for Estimating the Annual Homeless Population.”

Our examination suggests that the short-term homeless population is likely to account for half of the population that experiences homelessness annually.

Column four of *Table 1* shows that there is a reduction in the size of each successive monthly cohort in the annual population until the 12+ months group, when it jumps back up. Based on this scenario, about 2,600 individuals fall into the ranks of the persistently homeless group (12+ months) each year.

If the scenario is adjusted to show lower monthly exit rates from homelessness closer to those identified in an earlier study using data from the New York shelter system,¹² the annual number of individuals becoming persistently homeless roughly doubles to about 5,200. In that case, about half of the annualized homeless population is homeless for two months or less. Our preliminary estimate is that 2,600 to 5,200 individuals become persistently homeless each year in Los Angeles County.

Recognizing that a portion of them will exit the persistently homeless group within several years, whether through housing or otherwise, this range is consistent with a 2017 estimate of 17,500 chronically homeless individuals in Los Angeles County. This group is the cumulative outcome of many years of slow

2,600 to 5,200
individuals become
persistently
homeless each
year in Los
Angeles County.

Method for Estimating the Annual Homeless Population

The second column of *Table 1*, **Observed Percent Duration of Homelessness in Truncated HMIS Data**, contains the data presented in *Figure 12*, which is HMIS data on the total duration of homelessness that sheltered individuals have experienced in the preceding three years. The percentages by duration are very similar to the data presented in *Figure 13*, although *Figure 13* provides the duration of current stints of homelessness for unsheltered individuals in less precise time increments. Accordingly, the first column of *Table 1* can be interpreted in two ways. For sheltered individuals, it represents total amount of time homeless over the three years preceding the point-in-time estimate and the year following. For unsheltered individuals, it represents the total time in the current stint and year following the point-in-time estimate.

The **Percent Exited** rates in column three of *Table 1* express the chance that an individual with a certain total duration as given in column one is in their last month of homelessness for the annual period. These rates are estimated based on prior knowledge that an individual's chance of escaping homelessness decreases over the time, and very loosely based on the month-to-month attrition rates captured in *Figures 12* and *13*.

We stress that more accurate exit rates are needed to produce a verifiable estimate of the annual composition, including differentiation of rates for sheltered and unsheltered individuals. However, our approach allows us to explore the sensitivity of the annual composition to these exit rates. Examining these relationships more closely is a subject of future work.

The **Percent of Annual Homeless Population** in column four provides the estimate of the composition of the annual population.

The **Number of People in Annual Homeless Population** in column five is based on a point-in-time population size of 50,000, which is a round approximation of the 2017 estimate for Los Angeles County.

The **Multiplier** in column six provides the corresponding ratio of the annualized population to the point-in-time population. For example, if we observed 10,000 individuals whose current duration of homelessness has lasted for up to one month, we would expect 84,000 people with total duration of up to one month during the year. This reflects our proposition that some of each cohort of 10,000 would go on to two or more months of homelessness and some will exit homelessness during that month.

Another caveat is that there are at least two uncertainties that are not addressed by our methodology. *First*, the short-term homeless population is most likely to be unobserved, and we do not have reliable data to estimate the size of this unobserved population. If the short-term population is significantly underreported then it would account for an even larger share of the total. *Second*, we have not attempted to account for possible double-counting of individuals who have multiple short stints of homelessness. If the first uncertainty proved to be true it would lead to a larger annual population. On the other hand, if the second uncertainty proved to be true it would lead to a smaller annual population.

attrition into persistent homelessness. Many of these individuals also have disabilities, marking them as chronically homeless.

Efforts to address homelessness often focus on the costly and slow task of housing the chronically homeless cohort. The argument put forward in this report is that more effort needs to be invested in identifying and assisting individuals immediately after the onset of homelessness. It is essential to further reduce the share of people who remain homeless from one month to the next in order to reduce the number of people who become stuck in chronic homelessness.

Even a ten percent increase in the monthly exit rates from homelessness would reduce the number of people who become persistently homeless by almost half (47 percent), based on the estimates shown in *Table 1*.

Summary

The population of impoverished and precariously housed differs most from the reported homeless population in that there is a far larger share of children (33 vs. 4 percent). This suggests that homeless families with children are difficult to identify and enumerate.

African-American boys and girls 0 to 17 years of age are extremely over-represented among children experiencing homelessness. The rate of homelessness for African-American children is 10 times greater than the rate for Latino children and 13 times greater than the rate for European-American children. The ethnically disproportionate burden of homelessness among African-American adults begins in childhood.

African-American men 45 to 54 years of age are 16 times more prevalent among homeless residents than in the overall population.

The large share of the homeless population that experiences homelessness for only a short period of time has important operational implications. There is more diversity among people experiencing homelessness and often greater capacity to achieve an exit than is commonly appreciated.

Looking at the annual population scenario, 48 percent of individuals are estimated to be homeless for one month or less and there is a progressive decline in the number of people who remain homeless from one month to the next until the twelfth month, when the long-term homeless population balloons.

Based on the annual homeless population scenario, our preliminary estimate is that 2,600 to 5,200 individuals fall into persistent homelessness each year. Many of these individuals also have disabilities, marking them as chronically homeless. Los Angeles County's current population of chronically homeless individuals is the cumulative outcome of many years of slow attrition into persistent homelessness.

Even a ten percent increase in the monthly exit rates from homelessness could reduce the number of people who become persistently homeless by almost half.

Greatly reducing the share of people who cross these monthly thresholds of continuing homelessness is essential if we are to reduce the number of people who become stuck in chronic homelessness.

A 10% increase in monthly exit rates from homelessness would reduce the number of people who become persistently homeless by almost half.

Reducing chronic homelessness by increasing early and lasting exits from homelessness requires targeting the right interventions on the right individuals as quickly as possible.

Future work by the Economic Roundtable will use longitudinal data about individuals who experienced homelessness to build screening tools for differentiating the risk of chronic homelessness among early entrants. The first two tools will identify high risk individuals who are candidates for employment interventions and high risk foster youth.



Entering and Exiting Homelessness

Reasons for Homelessness

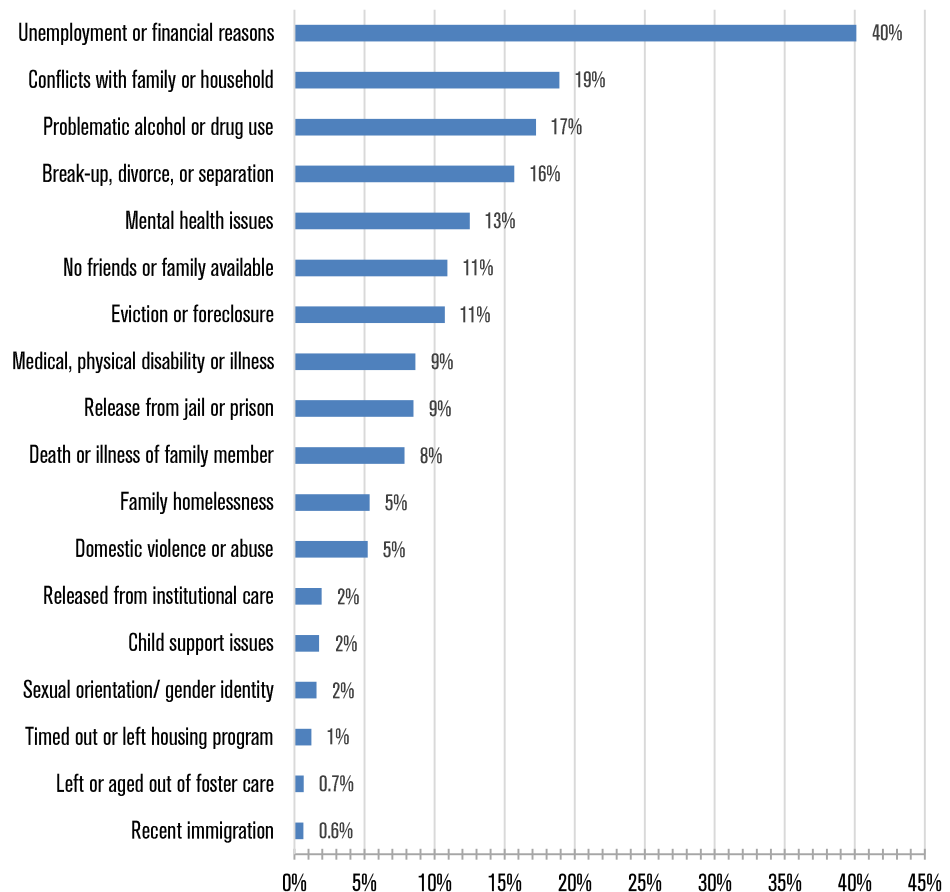
The surveys conducted as part of the two most recent homeless counts asked a total of over 10,000 unsheltered adults what the main reasons were for loss of their housing. As shown in *Figure 15*, by far the most frequently given reason was unemployment and lack of money—cited by 40 percent of individuals. This factor—encompassing unemployment, lack of cash aid, acute poverty, and inability to pay for shelter—is identified more than twice as often as any other factor as the cause of homelessness.

Social disconnection—breakdown of ties with other people—is another primary reason given for homelessness. Seven reasons, cited by a total of 45 percent of individuals point to loss of personal connections with other people as leading to loss of housing:

- Conflicts with family or household members 19 percent
- Break-up, divorce, or separation 16 percent
- No friends or family available 11 percent
- Death or illness of family member or child 8 percent
- Domestic violence, parental abuse, partner abuse, dating violence, or stalking 5 percent

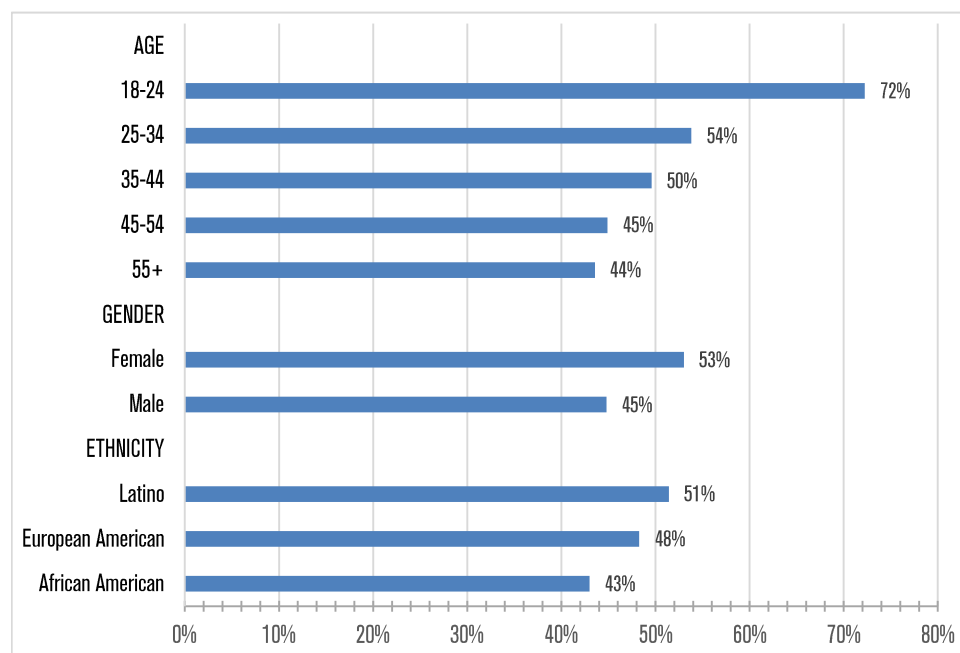
The most frequently given reason for homelessness is unemployment and lack of money.

Figure 15: Reasons Identified by Homeless Individuals for Their Loss of Housing



Source: LAHSA, 2016 and 2017 demographic surveys, unweighted data. Respondents identified an average of two reasons, so total responses exceed 100 percent.

Figure 16: Social Disconnection as a Reason for Homelessness by Gender and Age



Sources: LAHSA, 2016 and 2017 demographic surveys, unweighted data.

- Kicked out of home due to sexual orientation/ gender identity 2 percent
- Left or aged out of foster care 1 percent

Younger individuals are the most likely to identify one of the seven types of social disconnection listed as a reason for being homeless, as shown in *Figure 16*.

Although the sample of responses was small, roughly three-quarters of youth gave a reason related to social disconnection as the cause of their homelessness.¹³

Among individuals over 45 years of age, this reason drops to slightly under half.

Women are more likely than men to identify loss or absence of human connections as the cause of homelessness. Among ethnic groups, Latinos are most likely and African-Americans least likely to offer this explanation.

Three reasons, cited by a total of 30 percent of individuals, identify health and behavioral health problems as reasons why for their homelessness, with only small variation among age, gender and ethnic groups:

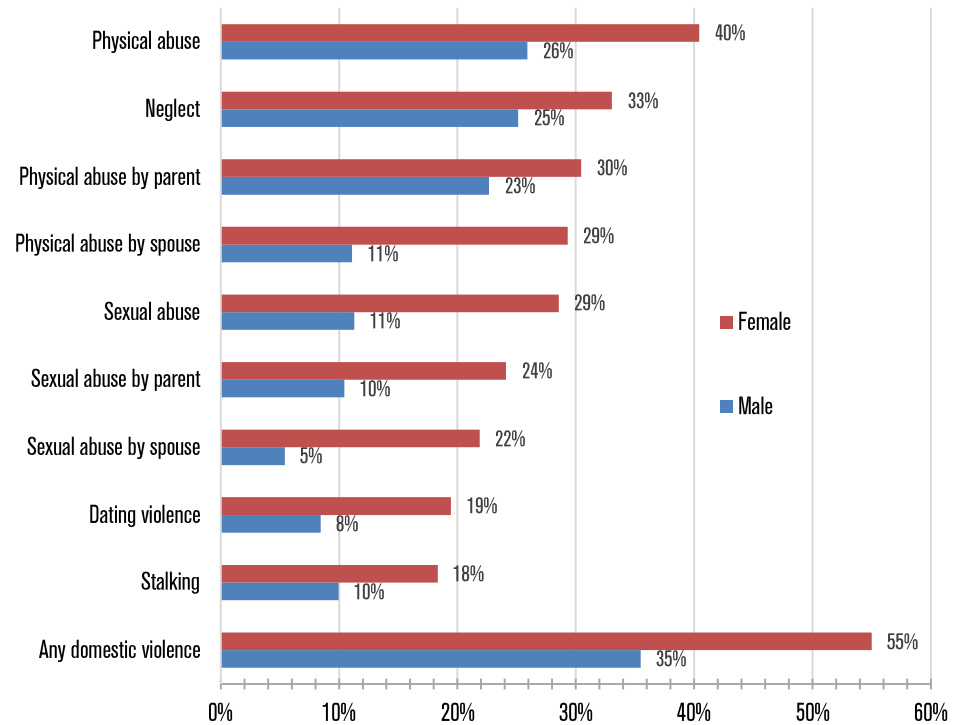
- Problematic alcohol or drug use 17 percent
- Mental health issues 13 percent
- Medical, physical disability or illness 9 percent

Only 13 percent of individuals identified mental health problems as the reason why they became homeless. To the extent these self-assessments are accurate, this undercuts the often expressed view that mental illness is a pervasive cause of homelessness. It may be that for some people, mental health problems emerged or become more serious as a result of homelessness. Later in this report we show a higher self-reported rate of mental illness among long-term homeless.

Taken altogether, the explanations given by people for why they are homeless suggest that in addition to housing, solutions for combating homelessness include sustaining employment, human connections, and comprehensive health care.

Young adults and women are most likely to identify social disconnection as the reason for homelessness.

Figure 17 Forms of Domestic Violence Experienced by Homeless Individuals



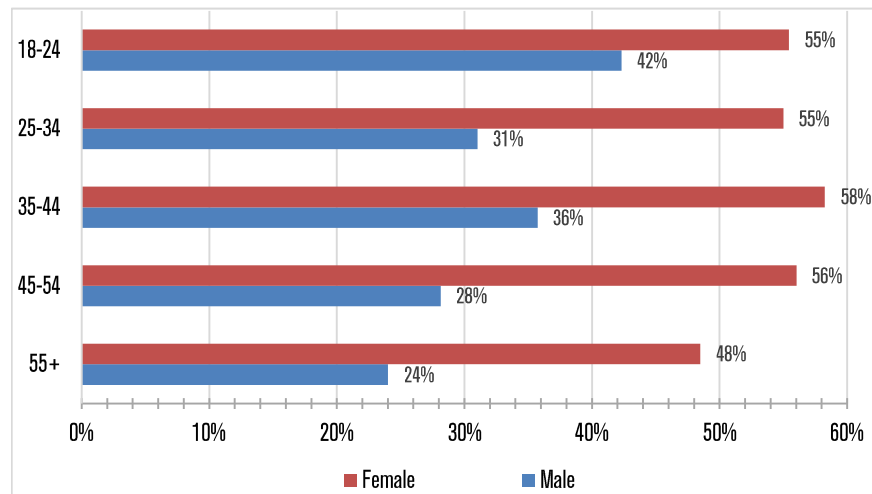
Source: LAHSA, 2017 youth and adult demographic surveys. Unweighted data for individuals 18 years of age or older.

Domestic Violence

55% of homeless women have experience violence at the hands of someone close to them.

Thirty-seven percent of homeless individuals report experiencing violence at the hands of others. These traumas are much more frequent among women—55 percent report experiencing some form of violence or sexual abuse (excluding neglect), compared to 35 percent among men, as shown in *Figure 17*.

Figure 18: Experiences of Domestic Violence by Gender and Age



Source: LAHSA, 2017 youth and adult demographic surveys, unweighted data.

Histories of physical abuse by parents or a spouse are reported most frequently—by 40 percent of women and 20 percent of men. Neglect is next most frequent, reported by 33 percent of women and 25 percent of men. Sexual abuse is reported by 29 percent of women and 11 percent of men—the widest gender gap in the data.

Histories of domestic violence vary by age as well as gender, as shown in *Figure 18*. All of the forms of abuse except neglect that are shown in *Figure 17* are aggregated into an overall category of domestic violence, with frequency of occurrence broken out by age and gender in *Figure 18*.

Over half of women through age 54 report histories of domestic violence. In contrast, reports of domestic violence decrease among men as age increases, from 42 percent for 18 to 24 year-olds to 24 percent for men 55 years of age and older. Overall, the probability of traumatic histories of domestic violence is especially high among young adults.

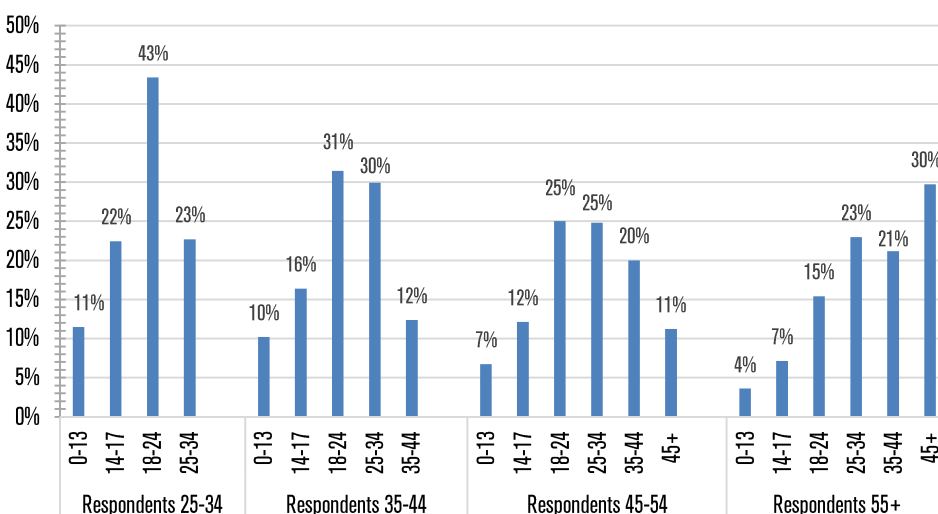
Age When First Homeless

The age when unsheltered homeless individuals said they were first homeless is broken out for four age groups in *Figure 19*. Across all age groups of respondents 25 years of age and older, the largest share (26 percent) said that their first homeless episode occurred when they were between 18 and 24 years of age, a quarter say it was when they were 25 to 34, and a fifth say it was when they were children.

However, the age profile for the onset of homelessness varies by the age of the respondent, with the onset shifting to older ages for respondents who are older. This suggests that for many individuals, even older individuals, the entry into homelessness has been recent.

A quarter of homeless individuals say they became homeless when they were 18-24 years old.

Figure 19: Age when First Homeless by Age of Unsheltered Homeless Respondents



Sources: LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Respondents 25+ years of age are included in the data. Some age cohorts do not total 100 percent because of rounding error.

Among the youngest group of respondents (25 to 34 years old), almost half (43 percent) reported having their first experience of homelessness when they were 18 to 24 years old, and a third (33 percent) when they were children 0 to 17 years of age. This adds up to over three-quarters (76 percent) who first became homeless when they were children or young adults.

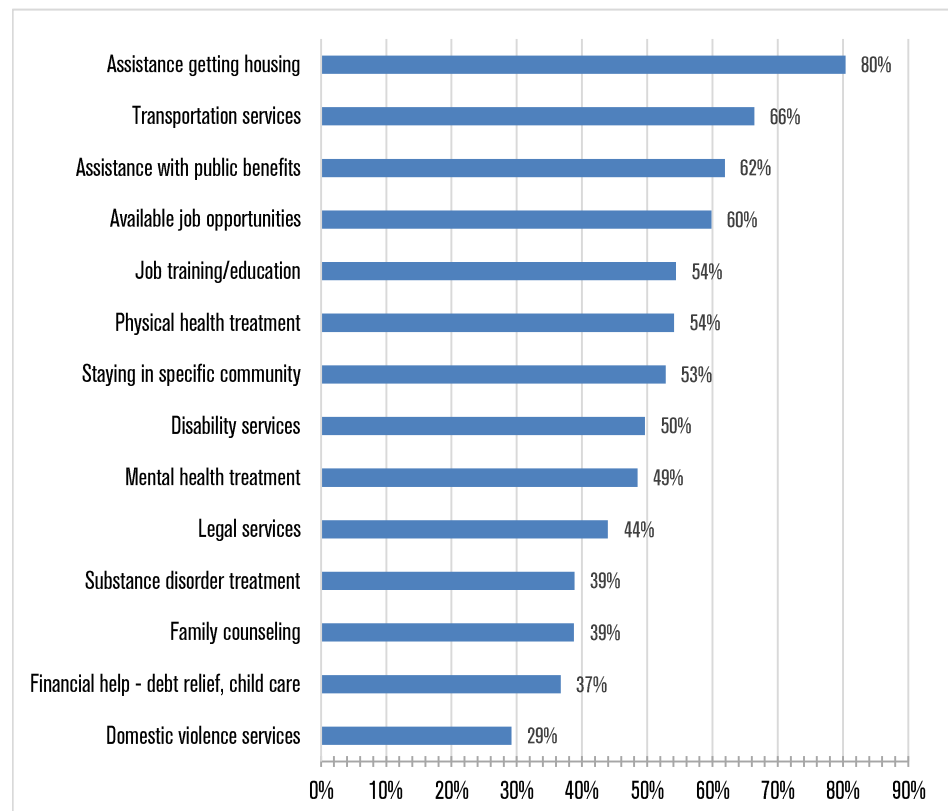
Among the next age cohort (35 to 44 years old), over half (57 percent), report that they first became homeless when they were children or young adults. The remainder entered homeless in their mid-twenties to mid-forties.

Among the next age cohort (45 to 54 years old), under half (44 percent), report that they first became homeless when they were children or young adults, although 18 to 24 was still the peak age range for initiation into homelessness for this age cohort, as it was for the two younger cohorts. Another quarter entered homelessness when they were 25 to 34 years of age. The remainder entered homeless when they were in their mid-thirties or older.

Among the oldest age cohort (55 years of age and older), the largest share (30 percent) said they first became homeless when they were 45 years of age or older. Only a quarter (26 percent) said it was when they were children or young adults.

The peak ages of 18 to 34 for the onset of homelessness should be years when individuals find jobs and build work histories. But for over half of the homeless population they were years when they were destitute and unable to obtain shelter. Individuals who enter chronic homelessness in early adulthood may well have a lifetime of public dependency and lost productive potential. Additional public

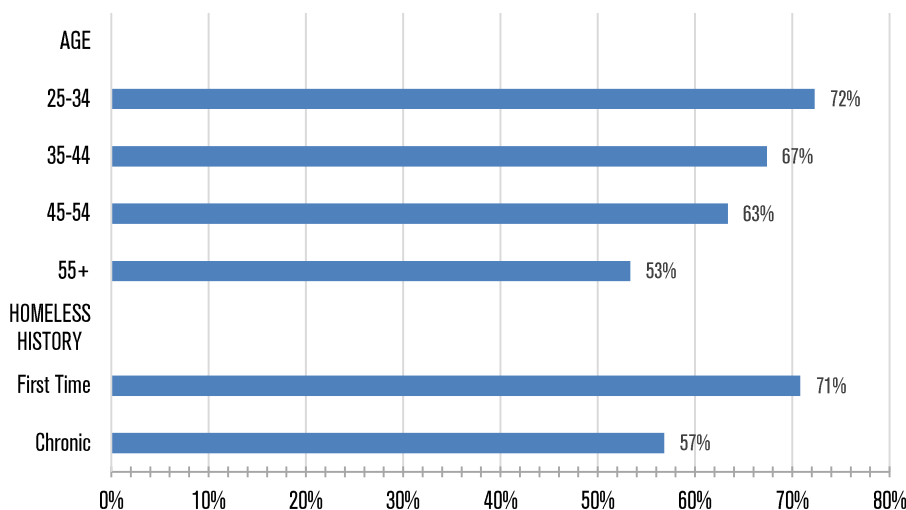
Figure 20: Types of Help That Are Very Important



Source: LAHSA 2017 demographic survey.

Getting housing is the most important type of help needed.

Figure 21: Percent Rating Access to a Job or Job Training as Very Important



Source: LAHSA 2017 demographic survey. Data is for unsheltered individuals 25 years of age or older.

investments to help these individual establish a foothold in the labor market may very well be cost effective.

Types of Help Sought

Homeless individuals on the street said that getting housing is the most important type of help they need, as shown in *Figure 20*. The other top five types of help that unsheltered individuals said were very important include: transportation (66 percent), public benefits (62 percent), jobs (60 percent), job training or education (54 percent), and health care (54 percent).

These priorities are largely consistent across ethnic and gender groups. The greatest divergence in priorities was about the importance of a job or job training and was based on age and length of time homeless, as shown in *Figure 21*. The importance of developing skills and finding a job diminishes with age and length of time homeless. Acquisition of skills and finding a job is very important for 72 percent of individuals 25 to 34 years of age and for 71 percent of people who are homeless for the first time, but was very important for only 53 percent of individuals 55 or older and 57 percent of individuals who are chronically homeless.

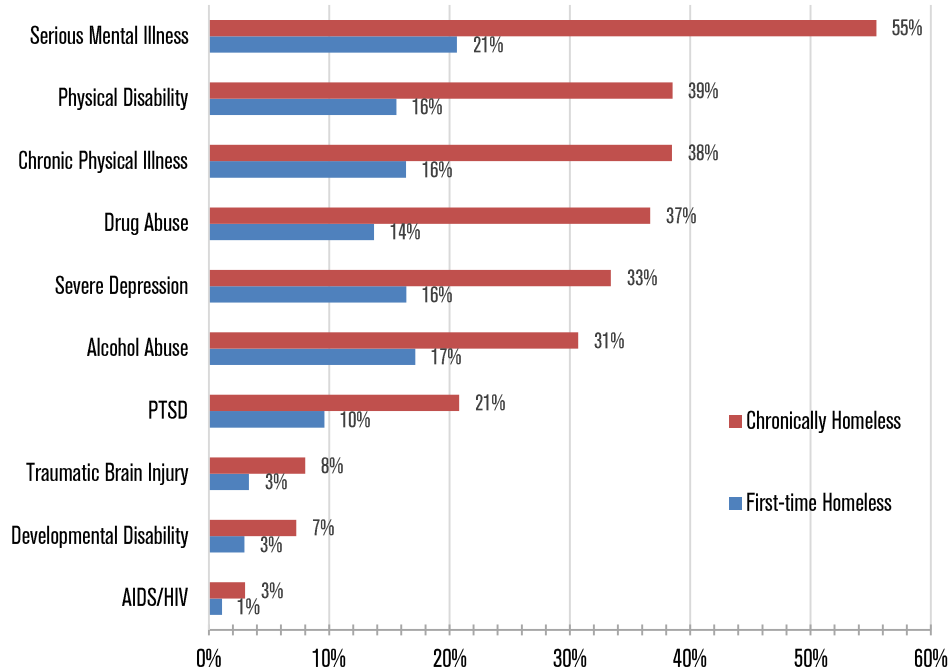
Acquisition of skills and finding a job is very important for nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of individuals 25 to 34 and people who are homeless for the first time.

Health Conditions

Over two-thirds of adults living on the streets reported in 2016 and 2017 that they had been diagnosed with one or more of the health conditions listed in *Figure 22*. Serious health conditions are reported two and a half times more frequently by chronically homeless individuals than by first-time homeless. Serious mental illness was reported most frequently (55 vs. 21 percent for chronic and first-time homeless, respectively).

Serious health conditions are reported 2½ times more frequently by chronically homeless individuals than by first-time homeless.

Figure 22: Health Conditions of Unsheltered Individuals by Homeless History



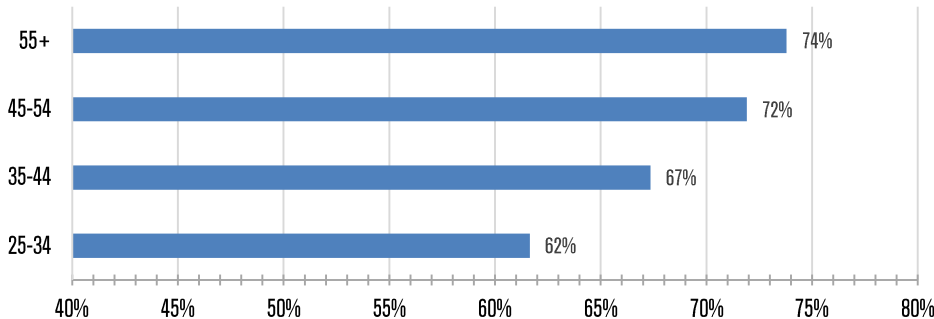
Source: LAHSA, 2016 and 2017 demographic surveys. Unweighted data for individuals 25 years of age and older.

Six other health conditions were reported by at least a fifth of chronically homeless individuals, with much lower prevalence rates among first-time homeless: physical disabilities 39 vs. 16 percent; chronic physical illness 38 vs. 16 percent; drug abuse 37 vs. 14 percent; severe depression 33 vs. 16 percent; alcohol abuse 31 vs. 17 percent; and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) 21 vs. 10 percent.

It is not clear from this data to what extent health conditions contribute to, or are a consequence of, chronic homelessness. The next stage of research using longitudinal records will address that question. What is clear from this data is that disabling health conditions are a defining characteristic of chronically homeless individuals.

There is a small amount of variation in the prevalence of health conditions by gender and ethnicity, with slightly higher rates reported by men and European-Americans. The greatest variation is based on age, which is shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23: Presence of Serious Health Conditions by Age



Source: LAHSA, 2016 and 2017 demographic surveys. Unweighted data for individuals 25 years of age and older.

An average of 62 percent of individuals 25 to 34 years report having one or more serious health conditions. This rate increases to 74 percent among individuals 55 years of age or older. The condition of homelessness compounds the diminished vitality that often accompanies age, resulting in serious health problems among nearly three-quarters of older persons experiencing homelessness.

Summary

By far the most frequently given reason for homelessness is unemployment, lack of cash aid, and consequent lack of money—cited by 40 percent of individuals. A frequent compounding factor is breakdown of social connections. This includes family conflict, breakup, violence, and death.

Younger individuals and women are the most likely to identify social disconnection as a reason for being homeless. Over a third of homeless adults and over half of women report having experienced violence at the hands of someone close to them.

Across all age groups of unsheltered homeless adults 25 years of age and older, over a quarter said that their first homeless episode occurred when they were between 18 and 24 years of age, a quarter say it was when they were 25 to 34, and a fifth say it was when they were children.

However, the age profile for the onset of homelessness varies by the age of the respondent, with the onset shifting to older ages for respondents who are older. This suggests that for many individuals, even older individuals, the entry into homelessness has been recent.

When asked what kind of help they need to escape homelessness, individuals living on the street say that getting housing is the most important type of help they need, followed by transportation, public benefits, jobs, job training or education, and health care.

These priorities are largely consistent across ethnic and gender groups. The greatest divergence in priorities was about the importance of a job or job training and was based on age and length of time homeless. The importance of developing skills and finding a job diminishes with age and length of time homeless. It was very important for almost three-quarters of individuals 25 to 34 years of age and people who are homeless for the first time

The condition of homelessness compounds the diminished vitality that often accompanies age, resulting in serious health problems among nearly three-quarters of older homeless persons. Serious health conditions are reported two and a half times more frequently by chronically homeless individuals than by first-time homeless. Serious mental illness was reported most frequently—by over half of chronically homeless individuals versus a fifth of first-time homeless.



Visible Homelessness

80% of children
find refuge in a
homeless shelter.

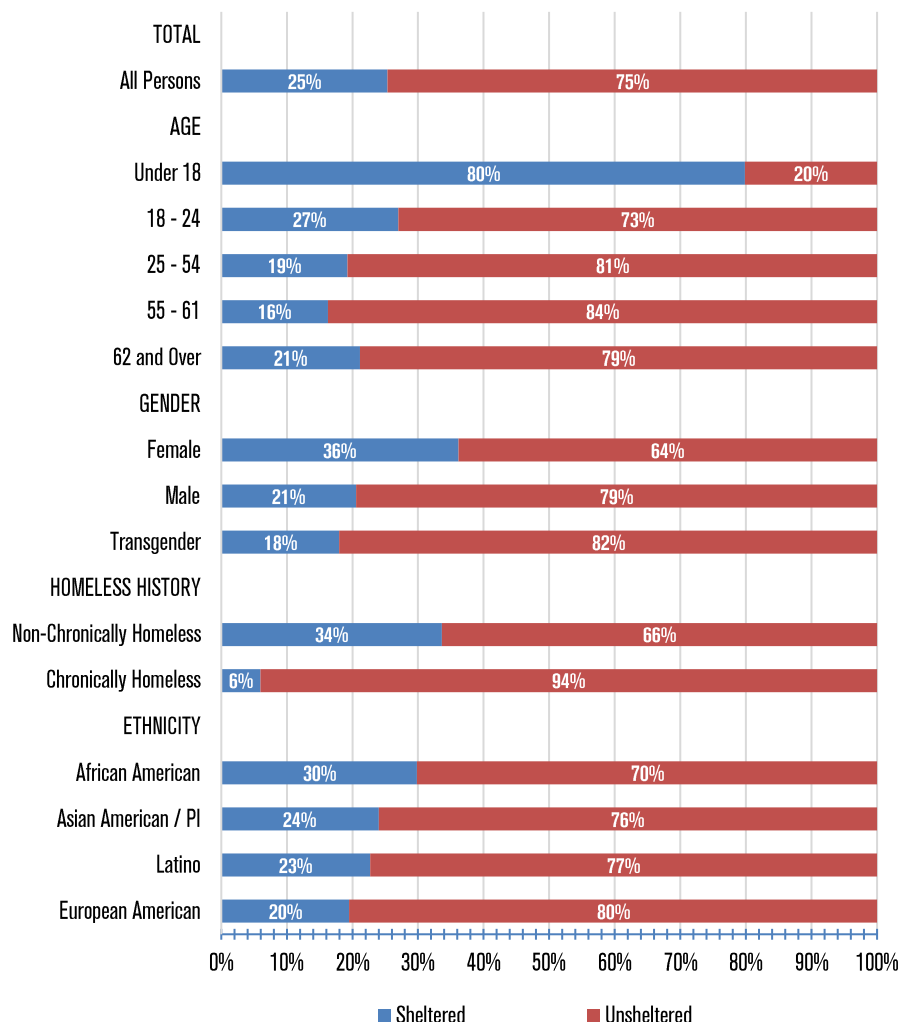
Street vs. Shelter

The most basic distinction in homeless dwelling places is between staying in shelter provided by a homeless service provider and residing on the street where one is visibly homeless. The 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—conducted in January—estimated that on a given night, 25 percent of homeless individuals resided in shelters and 75 percent in a setting not meant for human habitation, as shown in *Figure 24*.¹⁴

Children are the most likely to find refuge in a homeless shelter (80 percent). Non-chronic homeless individuals are more likely than chronically homeless to reside in a shelter (34 vs. 6 percent), and women are more likely than men (36 vs. 21 percent). Ethnicity is the least variable characteristic, with the largest share of shelter residents found among African-Americans (30 percent) and the smallest share among European-Americans (20 percent).

A street survey of individuals residing on the sidewalks of Los Angeles’s Skid Row asked what factors were most important when choosing between staying on the street and entering a shelter.¹⁵ The problems most frequently identified with

Figure 24: Shelter vs. Street in 2017



Source: LAHSA, 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—Data Summary, Los Angeles Continuum of Care.

shelter programs was that there was no source of income or housing after people reached the time limit for their program.

The affordable housing investments being made in Los Angeles County will make headway with the first problem by increasing the supply of permanent housing for people currently in shelters and on sidewalks. The second problem, of being unable to earn a livelihood, is receiving more attention, but much more is needed.

Street Trends

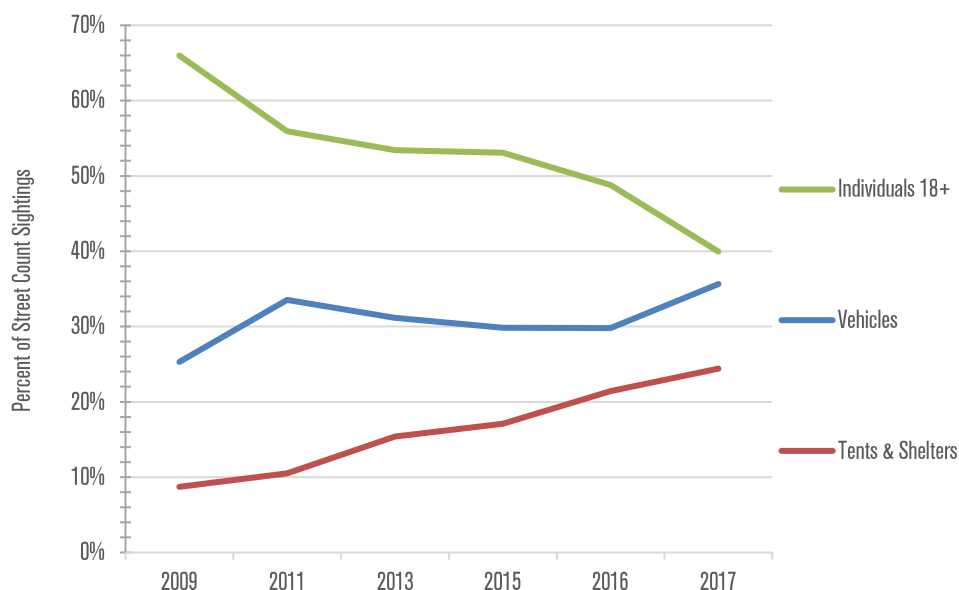
Each homeless street count includes a street count that enumerates unsheltered homeless people on the streets as well as in homeless dwellings in the form of tents, make-shift shelters, cars, vans, and campers or recreational vehicles. Trends from 2009 through 2017 in sighting these forms of homelessness are shown in *Figure 25*, with tents and shelters combined into one category and vehicles into another category.

The overall trend is that unsheltered individuals outdoors (e.g., unsheltered on a sidewalk) make up a decreasing share of homeless sightings, and tents and make-shift shelters make up an increasing share.

Vehicles accounted for a steady 30 percent of homeless sightings from 2013 to 2016. However, in 2017, the share of sightings that were vehicles increased to 36 percent—a fifth more than in the previous year. Vehicle hotspots were targeted as a priority in the homeless count for the first time in 2017. This increased effort may explain the increased vehicle count, or there may have been a concurrent increase in vehicle occupancy.

Tents and make-shift shelters make up an increasing share of homeless sightings.

Figure 25: Breakout of Homeless Sightings in Street Count of Unsheltered Persons



Sources: LAHSA street counts 2009 to 2017. Data includes single individuals 18 years of age or older but does not include the 0.02 percent of sightings that are of homeless families. Unweighted street count data.

Sightings of dwellings have a significant impact on the size of the count. In 2017, vehicles, tents and shelters were each estimated to provide shelter for an average of 1.8 inhabitants.¹⁶

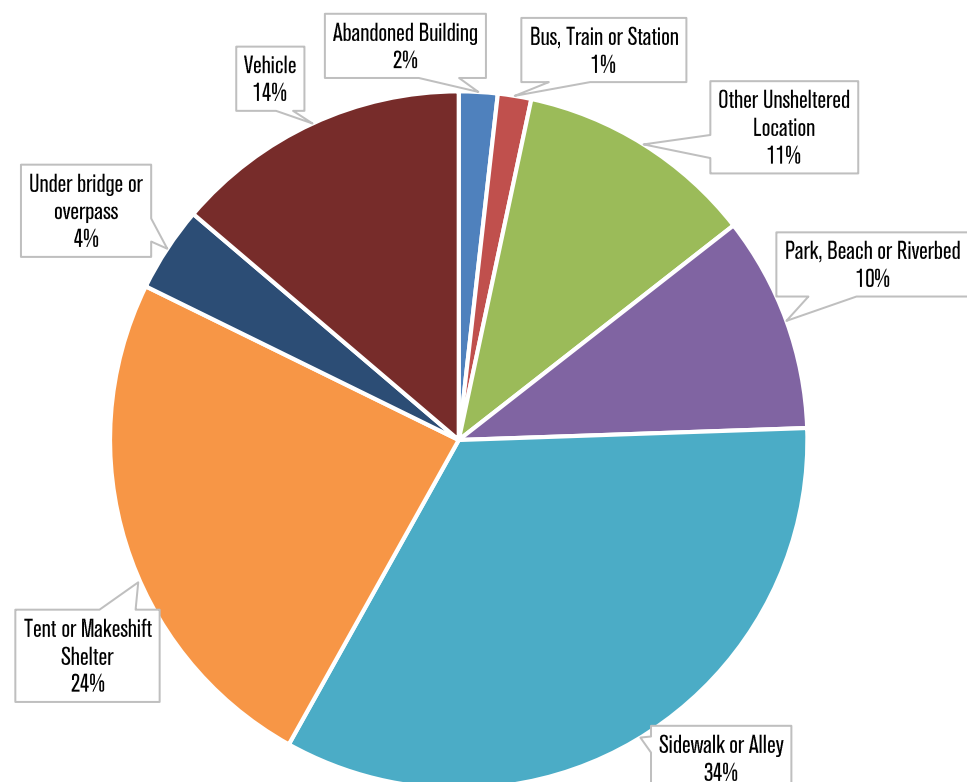
Types of Street Dwellings

Almost three-quarters of unsheltered homeless individuals are found in plain sight. This includes the most common setting in which unsheltered individuals were sighted in the 2017 homeless count—outdoors on streets or sidewalks—completely unsheltered settings, accounting for 34 percent of homeless sightings, as shown in *Figure 26*. This was followed by tents, outdoor encampments and other makeshift shelters (24 percent). The third setting in plain sight is private vehicles—cars, trucks, vans, recreation vehicles, and campers (14 percent).

Slightly over a quarter of unsheltered residents are in less conspicuous locations. This includes bus and train stations, transit centers, airports, and outdoor locations that don't fit any other category (12 percent). The next most frequent type of secluded location is rustic settings including parks, beaches, campgrounds, woods, and riverbeds (10 percent). Least frequent were places in the built environment that are not meant for human habitation, including abandoned buildings, parking lots, under bridges and overpasses, unconverted garages, attics, and basements (6 percent).

Individuals living on the streets are increasingly occupying some form of shelter.

Figure 26: Type of Street Dwelling in Past 30 Days



Source: LAHSA, 2017 demographic survey, unweighted data.

The trends shown in *Figure 25* indicate that individuals living on the streets are increasingly occupying some form of shelter—a tent, vehicle or place under a bridge. A smaller share of individuals is sleeping on a sidewalk or in a doorway.

These dwellings on sidewalks, in parks, under bridges, and in vehicles on public streets are an unsanctioned form of urban homesteading. Individuals’ urgent need to shelter themselves from the elements and achieve some measure of privacy places them in increasing conflict with the titleholder to the land, which often is the public.

Street Dwellings by Age

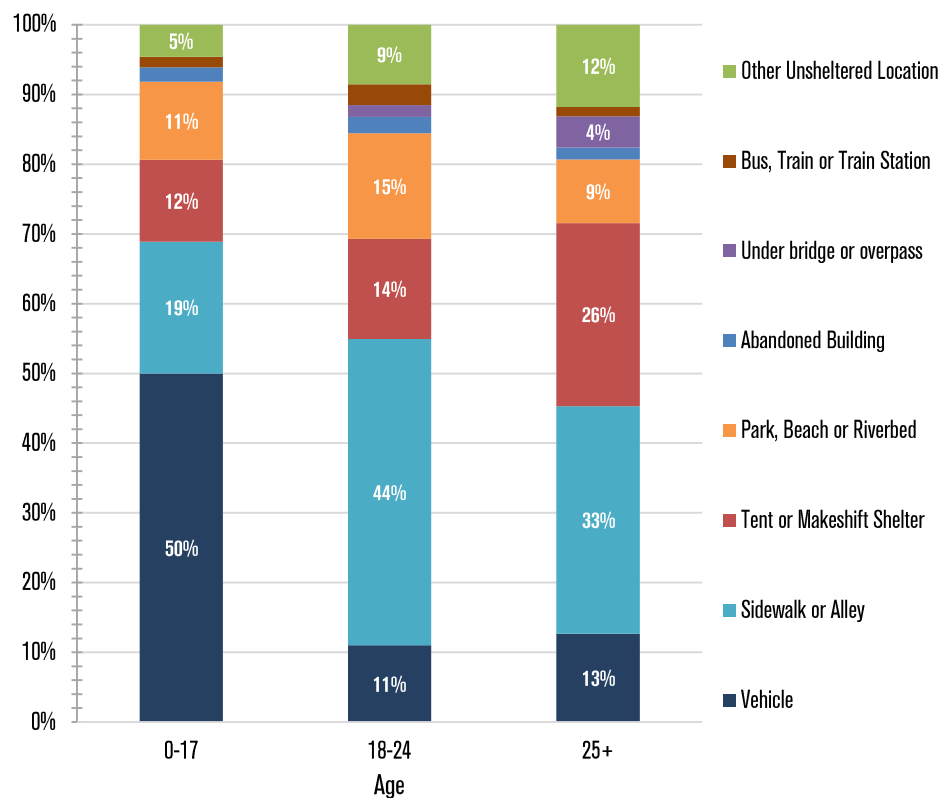
There are noticeable differences in the type of dwelling that unsheltered individuals occupy based on age, as can be seen in *Figure 27*. There are few differences based on ethnicity or gender.

Half of unsheltered children live in vehicles. Unsuitable as a vehicle is for being a child’s home, other unsheltered dwellings are more worrisome.

Children are much more likely than any other age group to reside in a shelter (80 percent, as shown earlier in *Figure 24*), and if not a shelter, a vehicle (half of the remaining 20 percent who are unsheltered, or 10 percent of all children). This means that on a given night, the dwellings of the remaining 10 percent of homeless children are something less secure than an emergency shelter or a vehicle.

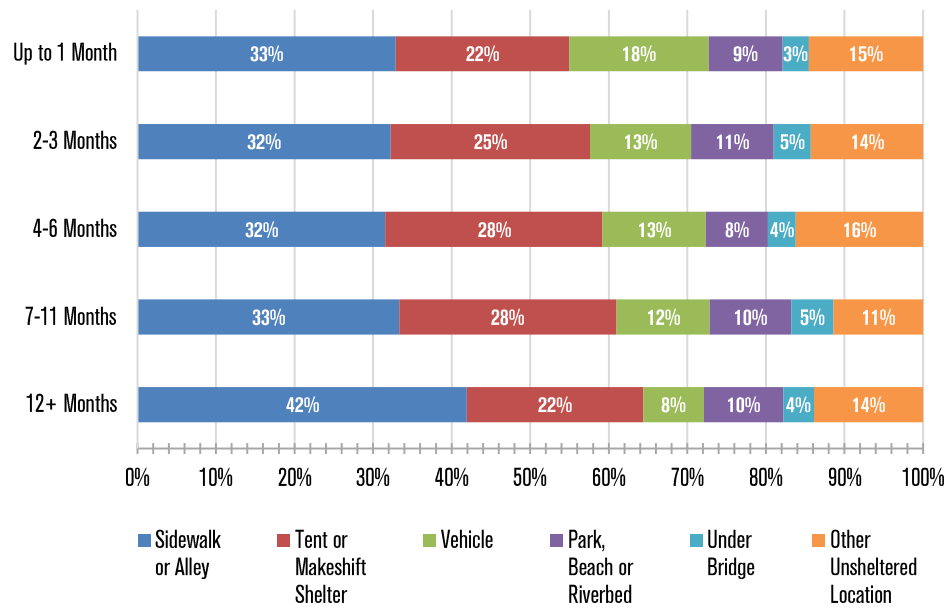
The dwellings for 10% of homeless children are something less secure than an emergency shelter or a vehicle.

Figure 27: Where Unsheltered Individuals Spent Most of the Last 30 Nights, by Age



Source: LAHSA, 2017 demographic survey, unweighted data.

Figure 28: Where Unsheltered Individuals Spent the Last 30 Nights, by Months Homeless this Time



Source: LAHSA, 2017 demographic survey, unweighted data.

The 2017 homeless count found that youth 18 to 24 years of age are more likely than any other age group to be found on a street, sidewalk or alley (44 percent vs. one-third of older individuals).

There is a progression that accompanies age in the increasing share of unsheltered individuals who occupy tents and makeshift shelters. The largest share is among unsheltered individuals 25 and older, with a quarter living in a tent, shelter, or outdoor encampment. An even larger share of this age group, a third, are found on a street, sidewalk or alley, but this is a smaller share than among younger groups.

Street Dwellings by Duration of Homelessness

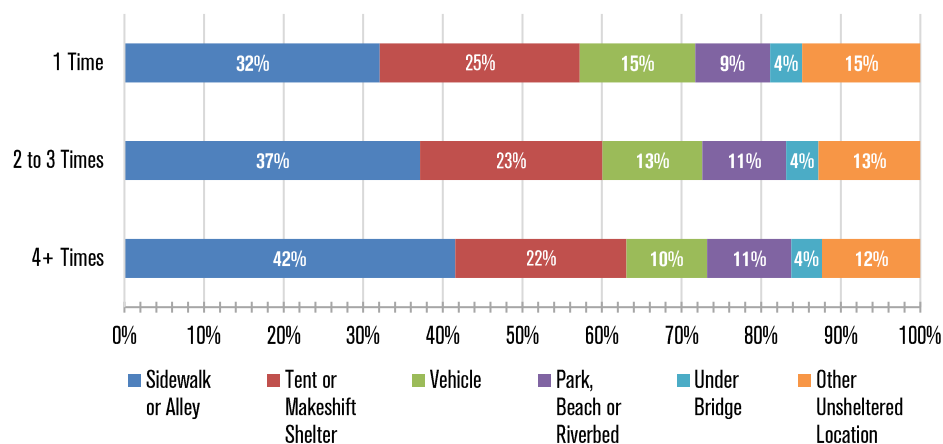
The dwellings unsheltered individuals are likely to occupy vary in similar ways based on how long and how many times they have been homeless, as shown in *Figures 28 and 29*. Individuals who have been homeless longer or more times are more likely to reside on a sidewalk or alley and less likely to reside in a vehicle.

The decreasing rate of vehicle occupancy among individuals who have been homeless longer or more often is important because vehicles are likely to be a more desirable dwelling place than a sidewalk, alley, freeway underpass, tent, or makeshift shelter. They also represent a financial asset for the individuals or family occupying the vehicle.

The decline in vehicle occupancy among longer-duration homeless individuals may be because individuals with vehicles are less likely to become long-term homeless, or it may be because it is difficult for homeless individuals to maintain ownership of vehicles. In addition to finding a safe and legal place to park, difficulties that homeless individuals with little if any income face as they seek to

There is a progression that accompanies age in the increasing share of unsheltered individuals who occupy tents and makeshift shelters.

Figure 29: Where Unsheltered Individuals Spent the Last 30 Nights, by Number of Times Homeless



Source: LAHSA, 2017 demographic survey, unweighted data.

retain their vehicles include lack of money to pay for maintenance, fuel, registration fees, parking tickets, and vehicle impoundment fees.

The substantial cost of vehicle ownership is compounded by lack of legal parking places, which can create large additional costs for parking tickets and vehicle impoundment.

In most cases, vehicles provide the best dwelling option for unsheltered individuals. Vehicles are usually weather-tight and provide greater security for individuals and their possessions than other types of unsheltered dwellings. Campers and RVs usually provide some of the amenities of a home, including beds.

Given the shortage of temporary shelter space and even greater shortage for permanently affordable housing, it is beneficial and cost-effective to help homeless individuals retain their vehicles. This includes providing legal places to park together with sanitary facilities for occupants of the vehicles.

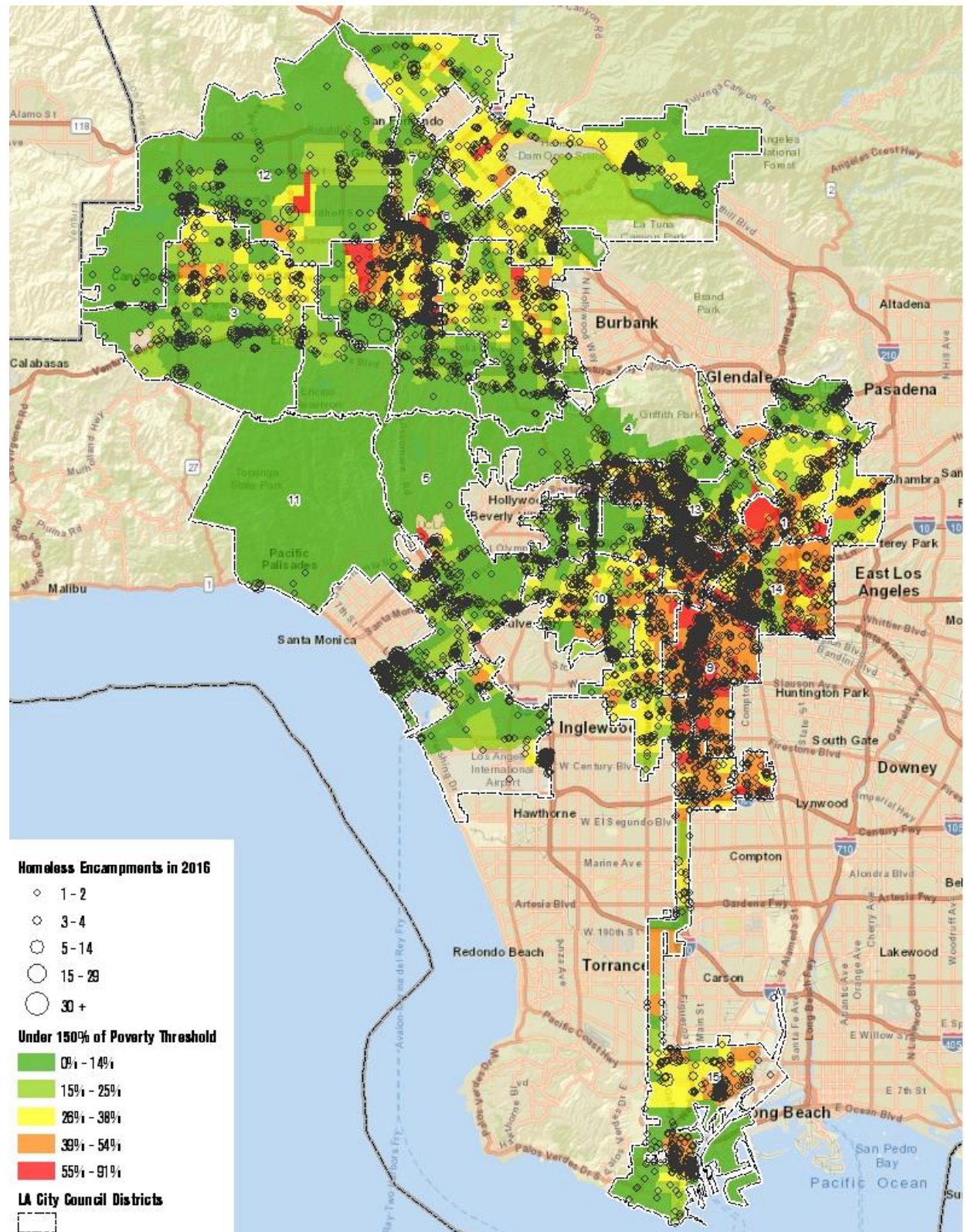
It is beneficial and cost-effective to help homeless individuals retain their vehicles.

Homeless Encampments

Some people experiencing homelessness reside in encampments of tents and makeshift shelters constructed of tarps, cardboard, and other available materials. The location of these encampments shifts over time, moving in response to police enforcement, neighborhood concerns and city sanitation clean-ups. There were a total of 14,726 service requests made by Los Angeles residents in 2016 to report homeless encampments through the city's web site for requesting services (MyLA311). These requests are mapped in *Figure 30*. The background colors in the map show the percent of low-income residents, with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty threshold in the census tract.

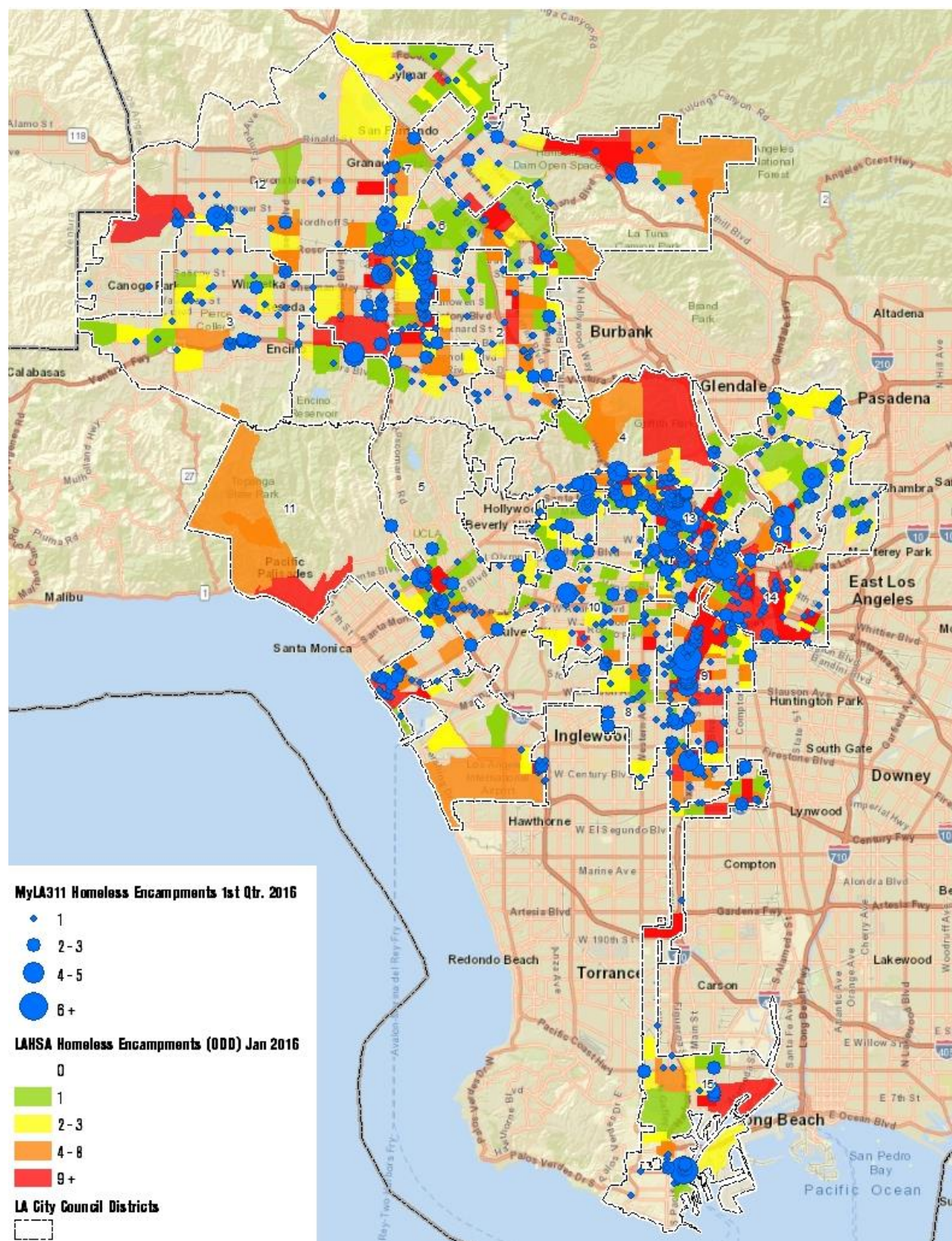
The pattern that stands out is that homeless encampments are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and unoccupied public spaces such as parks, freeway corridors, underpasses, and hillsides. Neighborhoods with the greatest numbers of homeless encampments include a large swath from Hollywood to Downtown Los

Figure 30: Homeless encampments in the City of Los Angeles, based upon MyLA311 Service Requests in 2016



Source: Bureau of Sanitation, City of Los Angeles service requests 2016. Data includes just Investigations of Homeless Encampments. Background colors show the percent of the population in each census tract with incomes under 150 percent of the poverty threshold.

Figure 31: Homeless Encampments in the City of Los Angeles, based upon MyLA311 Service Requests during 1st Quarter 2016 and the January 2016 LAHSA Homeless Street Count



Sources: Bureau of Sanitation, City of Los Angeles service requests, 2016, Investigations of Homeless Encampments. LAHSA, 2016 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, street count of tents and make-shift shelters. The number of these outdoor dwellings (ODD) in each census tract is shown by the background color.

Homeless
encampments are
concentrated in
low-income
neighborhoods and
unoccupied public
spaces.

Angeles and South Los Angeles, with other clusters in Venice, North Hills-Raymer, Van Nuys, and San Pedro.

Homeless encampments reported through residents' requests for city services in the first quarter of 2016 are juxtaposed with the homeless street count of encampments in January 2016, in *Figure 31*. Street count results are represented by the colors of census tracts, which make up the background of the map. The number of encampments reported by residents is represented by the size of the blue circles on the map.

Hot spots based on both residents' requests for city services and results from the 2016 homeless count span from Hollywood through Downtown Los Angeles and South Los Angeles, as well as in the San Fernando Valley along the 405 freeway corridor, around the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area, and along Van Nuys Boulevard. Other hot spots revealed in both data sources include the Sunland-Tujunga region, Pacific Palisades, Venice and the abandoned Manchester Square near LAX.

Areas that were hot spots based on service requests to the city about homeless encampments but *not* based on the 2016 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count include Hollywood, the Fairfax-Miracle Mile-West Adams corridor, the Winnetka-Reseda neighborhoods, and the Eagle Rock-Highland Park-Montecito Heights neighborhoods. The divergence in these communities between reports by residents and results from the homeless count raises the possibility that the homeless count may have missed some encampment hot spots.

Summary

The most basic distinction in homeless dwelling places is between staying in shelter provided by a homeless service provider and residing on the street where one is visibly homeless. Reasons why homeless individuals may choose not reside in an emergency shelter include the lack of lasting solutions at the end of the shelter stay, particularly a source of income or housing after people reached the time limit for their program.

Children are the most likely to find refuge in a homeless shelter, followed by women, and then by non-chronically homeless individuals.

Among the one-fifth of children who are unsheltered, half reside in vehicles. This means that on a given night, the dwellings for 10 percent of homeless children are something less secure than an emergency shelter or a vehicle.

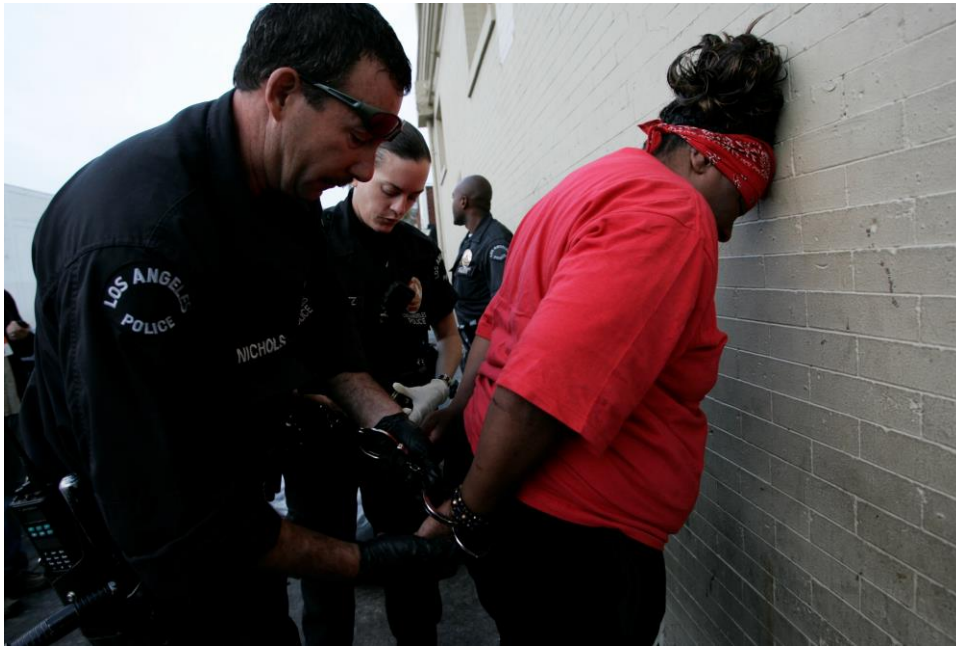
The long-term trend in the dwellings occupied by unsheltered individuals is that persons sleeping on sidewalks make up a decreasing share of homeless sightings; and tents and makeshift shelters make up an increasing share. There is a progression that accompanies age in the increasing share of unsheltered individuals who occupy tents and makeshift shelters.

Sleeping on sidewalks and alleys is most prevalent among youth 18-24 years of age—accounting for almost half of the locations where unsheltered youth spend the night.

Homeless encampments are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and unoccupied public spaces such as parks, freeway corridors, and hillsides.

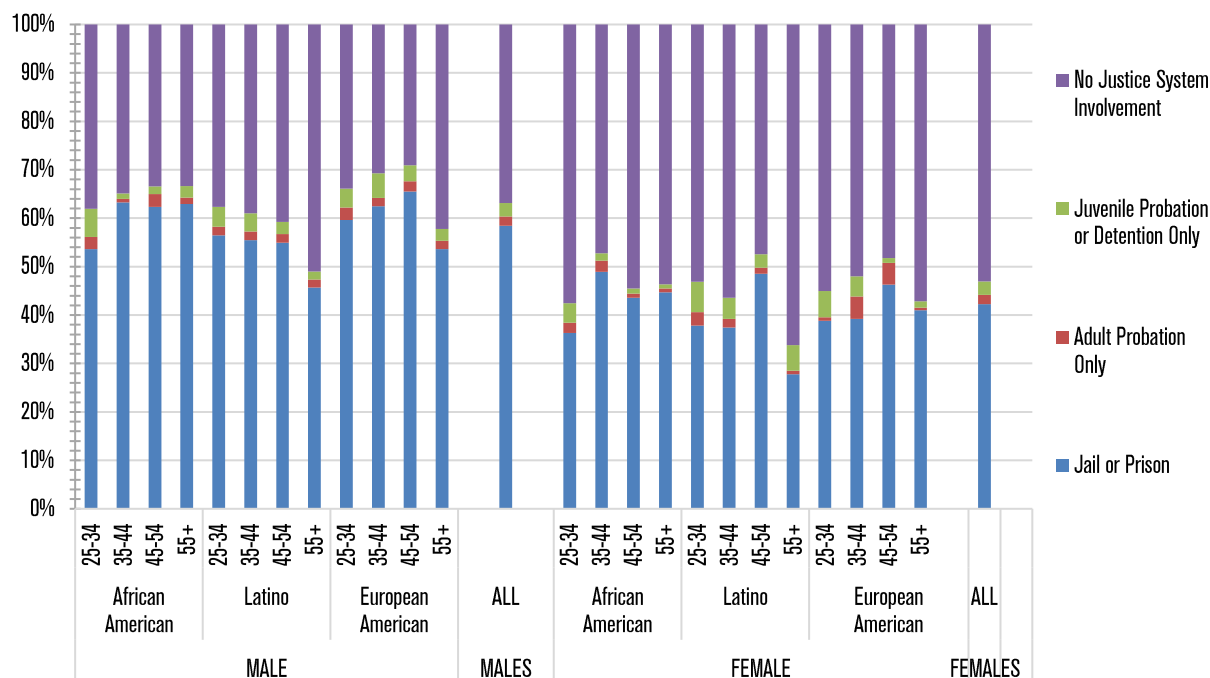
Roughly a third of unsheltered homeless individuals live in a vehicle. However, the rate of vehicle occupancy drops by over half among individuals who have been homeless 12 months or longer. This may well be because the substantial cost of vehicle ownership is compounded by lack of legal parking places, parking tickets and vehicle impoundment.

In most cases, vehicles provide the best dwelling option for unsheltered individuals. It is beneficial and cost-effective to help homeless individuals retain their vehicles. This strategy includes providing legal places to park together with sanitary facilities for occupants of the vehicles. It can also include assistance in paying vehicle registration and maintenance costs.



Justice System Involvement

Figure 32: Justice System Involvement by Gender, Ethnicity and Age



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Data is for adults 25 years of age and older.

Rate of Justice System Involvement

One of the most consistent characteristics among homeless adults is a history of incarceration, as shown in *Figure 32*. Fifty-eight percent of homeless men 25 years of age or older and 42 percent of women report having been in jail or prison. These rates are self-reported and likely to be conservative because a criminal history is stigmatizing, making some people reluctant to disclose it. About a third of reported stints of incarceration are in state prison and the other two-thirds in county jail. The rates are largely consistent among all ethnicities and ages of men, as well as among women.

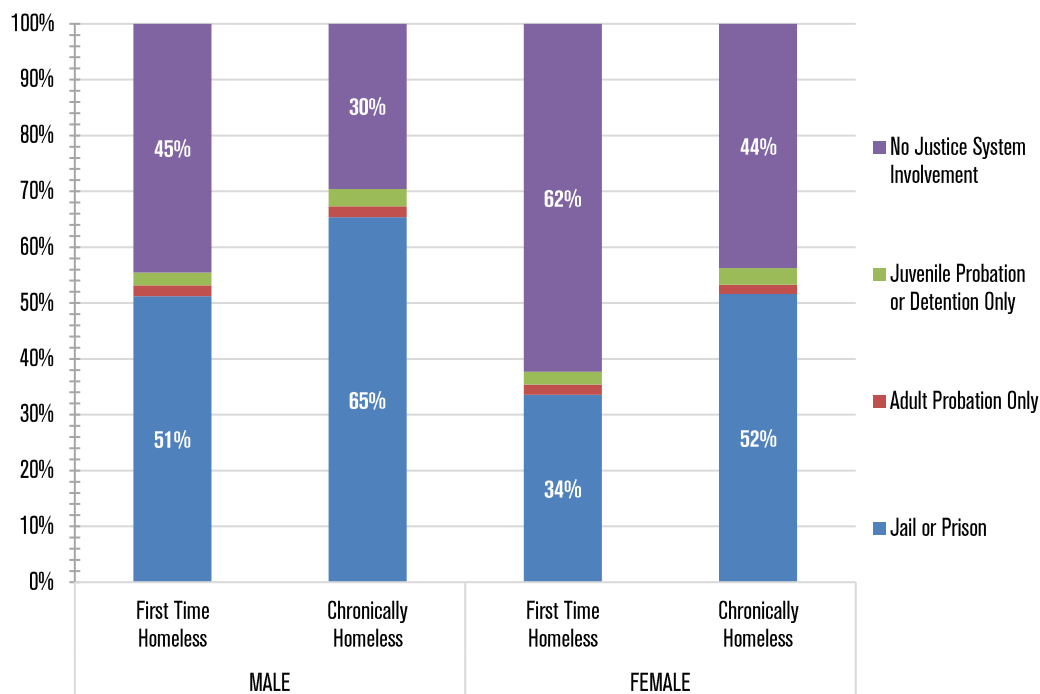
This information does not tell us whether incarceration preceded or followed homelessness, but the fact that the rates of incarceration are similar between European-Americans, who typically have lower risk of justice system involvement, and African-Americans, who typically have higher risk, suggests that it is a common outcome of homeless residents' destitution, desperation, placelessness, and exposure to scrutiny of all types. There appears to be a powerful, crosscutting interplay between homelessness, justice system attention, and incarceration that marginalizes individuals and further forecloses life options other than homelessness.

Type of Justice System Involvement

Three percent of both women and men report having been on adult probation but not incarcerated. An additional 23 percent were both incarcerated and on probation.

A third of reported stints of incarceration are in state prison and the other two-thirds in county jail.

Figure 33: Justice System Involvement of First-time vs Chronically Homeless



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Data is for adults 25 years of age and older.

Three percent of men and one percent of women report having been on probation or in detention as a juvenile, but not involved in the justice system as adults. An additional 14 percent of men and 10 percent of women report having both juvenile and adult involvement in the justice system.

By comparing the rates of juvenile and adult involvement with the justice system, the data indicates that out of the 58 percent of men and 42 percent of women who have been incarcerated, three-quarters did not have juvenile records and the onset of involvement in the criminal justice system occurred as adults. This suggests that the condition of homelessness heightens exposure to the justice system and the risk of criminalization.

Comparing the incarceration rate of first-time homeless residents, who have short exposure to homelessness, to the rate of chronically homeless, who have extended exposure, offers some evidence about whether incarceration is a precursor to homelessness or an outcome that accompanies homelessness. This comparison is shown in *Figure 33*.

Half of men (51 percent) who are homeless for the first time have been incarcerated, suggesting that jail or prison preceded homelessness for these men, whereas two-thirds of chronically homeless men (65 percent) have been incarcerated. This indicates that incarceration frequently foreshadows homelessness, and that prolonged exposure to homelessness increases the rate of incarceration among men by 14 percentage points.

A third of women (34 percent) who are homeless for the first time have been incarcerated, whereas over half of chronically homeless women (52 percent) have been incarcerated. This indicates that prolonged exposure to homelessness

3/4 of those incarcerated did not have juvenile records and criminal justice involvement began in adulthood.

Prolonged exposure to homelessness increases the rate of incarceration among women by 53%.

increases the rate of incarceration among women by over half. The increase in post-homeless justice system involvement is far greater among women than among men.

This is a cycle for both women and men in which criminal justice involvement increases marginalization and risk of homelessness, and then homelessness brings attention from law enforcement and heightens the risk of conviction for criminal activity, even for individuals who previously have not been involved with the criminal justice system, resulting in further marginalization.

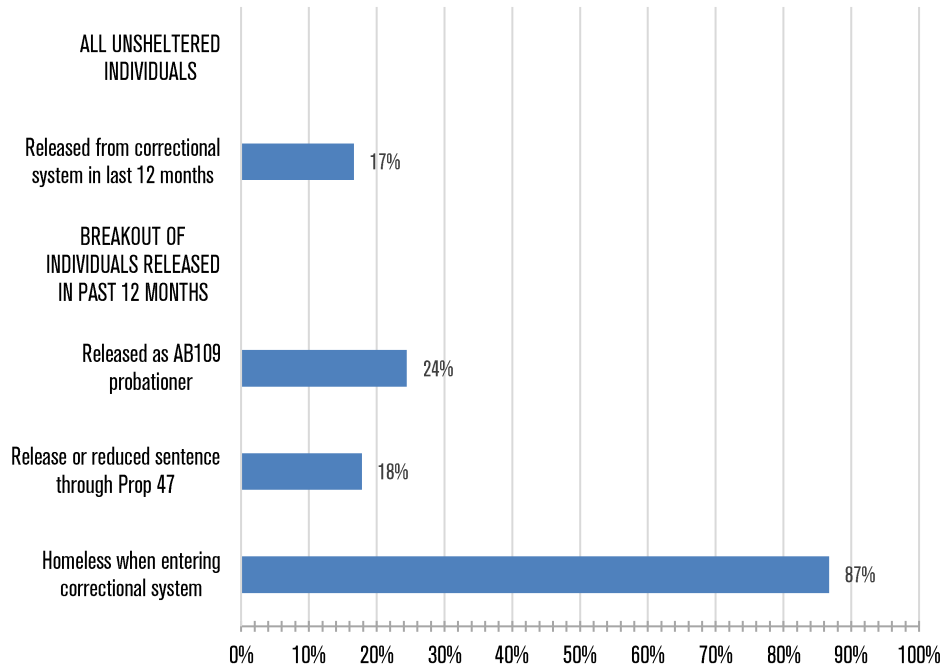
The “Safer Cities Initiative” was implemented in September 2006, bringing 50 additional police officers to Skid Row to address quality of life issues such as crosswalk violations, littering, loitering, and sleeping on the sidewalk.¹⁷ This initiative ended in 2013 following a court ruling that it was unconstitutional.

The officers issued roughly 1,000 citations a month, bringing many homeless individuals under the purview of the justice system. This led to cascading consequences when minor citations led to probation, then to violation of the terms of probation because of, for example, failure to appear for drug testing, and then to felony charges. It is likely that these interventions had long-term impacts in extending the duration of homelessness among those who were cited or arrested and contributed to the level of chronic homelessness that exists today.

Recent Justice System Involvement

In 2016 and 2017, 17 percent of unsheltered individuals on the street who were interviewed for the homeless count demographic survey reported that they had been released from jail or prison in the last 12 months, as shown in *Figure 34*.

Figure 34: Individuals Released from a Correctional Institution in the Past 12 Months



Sources: LAHSA 2016 and 2017 demographic surveys. Unweighted data for individuals 25 years of age or older.

Eighty-seven percent of these recently incarcerated and now homeless individuals reported they were homeless when they entered the correctional system.

Twenty-four percent of those incarcerated, or 4 percent of all respondents, were released as probationers under AB 109, which transferred responsibility for non-violent, non-serious, and non-sex offenders to county jails and probation departments.

Eighteen percent (3 percent of all respondents) were released or had reduced sentences under Proposition 47, which required misdemeanor sentencing instead of felony for crimes such as shoplifting and personal use of most illegal drugs.

Crimes Against and By Homeless Residents

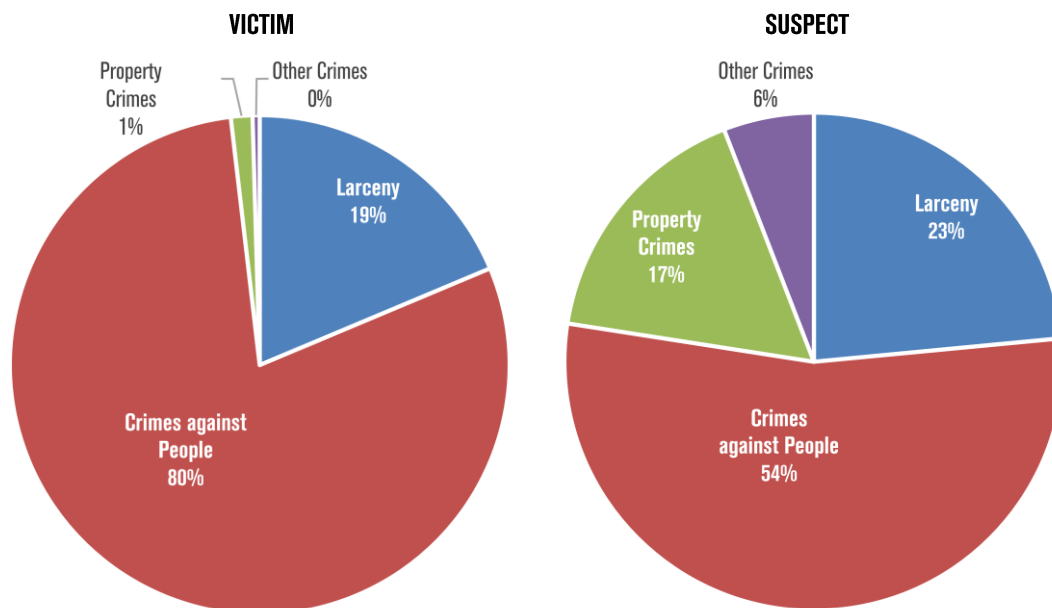
Los Angeles residents' encounters with the justice system while homeless are captured in police crime logs and arrest records, in addition to the court system. The county is policed by 45 different municipal law enforcement agencies, making it difficult to analyze data on these encounters across all jurisdictions. Fortunately, the Los Angeles Police Department—the nation's third largest police force—releases its crime log and arrest records online, which include indicators of homelessness. The status of homeless residents in these crime reports is as follows:

- Victim is homeless/transient 26 percent
- Suspect is homeless/transient 61 percent
- Both victim and suspect are homeless/transient 13 percent

Crime reports where the *victim* was homeless are compared with reports where the *suspect* was homeless, broken out by major categories of crime in Figure 35.¹⁸

Crimes in which the victim was homeless accounted for 26% of all crimes involving homeless individuals.

Figure 35: City of Los Angeles Crimes Where the Victim or Suspect was Homeless, by Type, 2010-17



Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site. M.O. Codes 1218 and 2004 identify crimes where the victim and/or suspect, respectively, is homeless.

Table 2: City of Los Angeles Crimes Reported, by Housing Status and Type of Crime

	Non-Homeless	Victim is homeless/transient	Suspect is homeless/transient	Victim and Suspect are both homeless/transient
Larceny	53%	19%	23%	6%
Crimes against People	33%	79%	54%	92%
Property Crimes	11%	1%	17%	1%
Other Crimes	3%	0.5%	6%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site. M.O. Codes 1218 and 2004 identify crimes where the victim and/or suspect, respectively, is homeless.

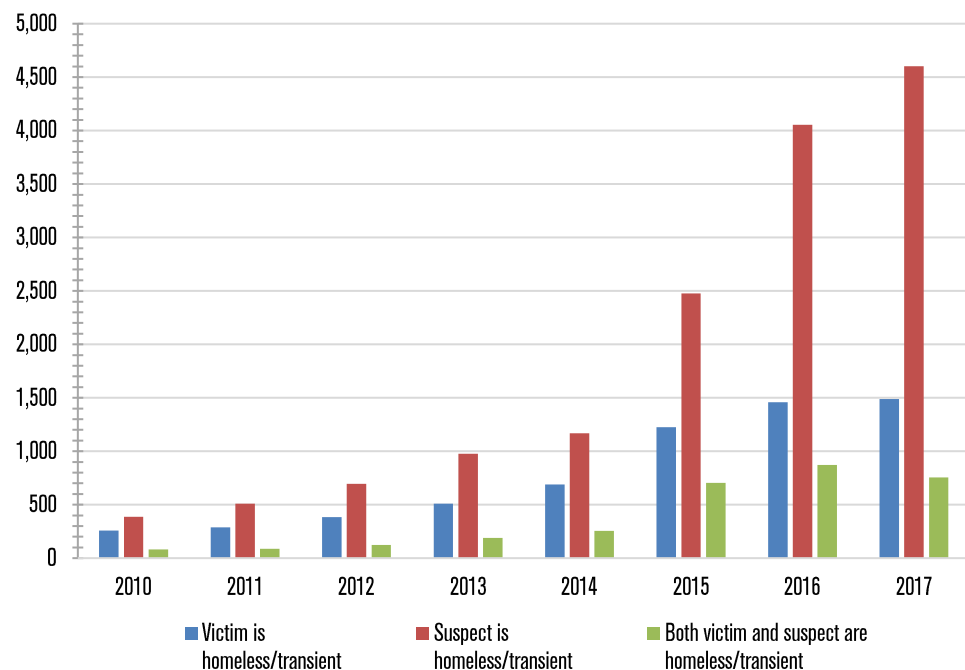
Crimes where L.A. homeless are the victim are overwhelmingly assaultive – crimes against the victim’s body.

Crimes where homeless residents are the victim are overwhelmingly assaultive—crimes against the victim’s body—(80 percent), diminishing their physical and mental wellbeing. The most common crimes against people include assault and battery, brandishing a weapon, rape, indecent exposure, resisting arrest, and homicide.

Larceny accounts for most of the remainder of reported crimes against homeless residents (19 percent), and includes robbery, burglary, shoplifting, stolen vehicles and bicycles, identity theft, purse snatching and pickpocketing. Crimes against the private property of homeless persons, including such offenses as vandalism and vehicle theft, are understandably rare (1 percent), given the limited private property that most possess.

Crimes where the *suspect* is believed to be homeless are more diverse. Crimes against people are the majority (54 percent), followed by larceny (23 percent). Property crimes are next with 17 percent of the total, and include trespassing, vandalism, arson, and illegal dumping. Other crimes make up the remaining six

Figure 36: Homeless-Involved Crimes Reported in the City of Los Angeles – as Victims and Suspects, 2010-2017



Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site. M.O. Codes 1218 and 2004 identify crimes where the victim and/or suspect, respectively, is homeless. 2017 data is incomplete because of partial 4th quarter data.

percent, and include violation of court orders, contempt of court, and other miscellaneous crimes.

Crimes committed by *non-homeless* individuals were more than twice as likely to entail larceny than if a *homeless* individual was involved, as shown in *Table 2*. Crimes where both the victim and suspect were homeless were overwhelmingly committed against people (92 percent), including assault and battery. Larceny between homeless residents accounted for only six percent of crimes where both victim and suspect were homeless.

The number of reported crimes against and by homeless residents from 2010 through 2017 is shown in *Figure 36*. Over this period, crimes in which the *victim* was homeless accounted for 26 percent of all crimes involving homeless individuals, and this type of crime increased 477 percent from 2010 to 2017.

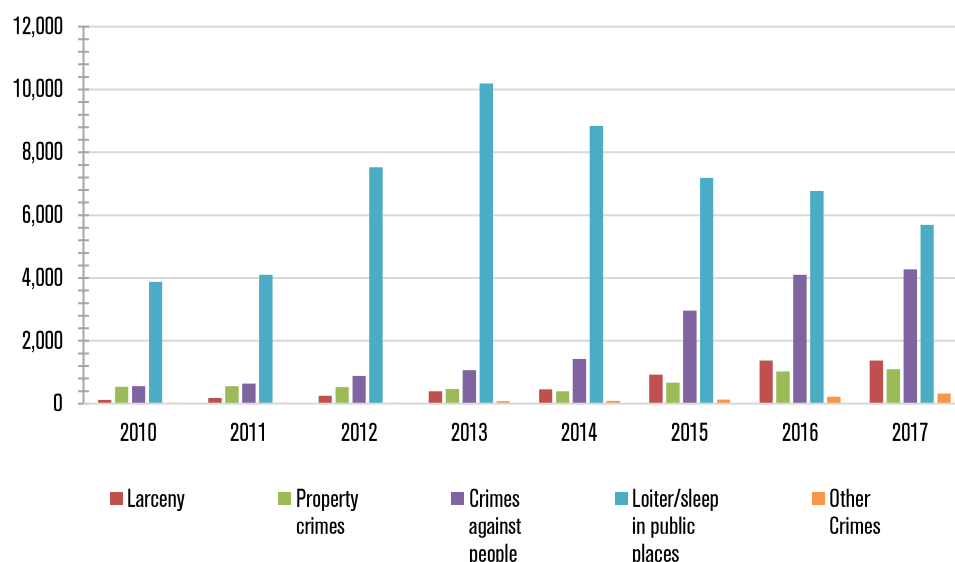
Crimes in which just the *suspect* was homeless accounted for 61 percent of homeless-involved crimes and increased 1,092 percent. Crimes in which *both victim and suspect* were homeless accounted for 13 percent of homeless-involved crimes and increased 831 percent.

These marked increases may partly be explained by greater attention paid to homeless individuals as this population has increasingly spilled out of Skid Row and become visibly present in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles. Another factor may be the increase in the number of homeless individuals, including the number who are chronically homeless.

Trends in the types of homeless-involved crimes reported and arrests made are shown in *Figure 37*. These are crimes in which homeless residents were the victim, suspect, or both.

The predominant justice system encounter for homeless residents was loitering or sleeping in a public place.

Figure 37: Homeless-Involved Crimes Reported and Arrests Made in the City of Los Angeles – as Victims, Suspects or Arrestees by Type, 2010-2017



Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site. The “Loiter/ Sleep in Public Places” category is from LAPD arrest data; all other categories are from LAPD Crime report data, in which homeless residents may be the victim, suspect, or both. 2017 data is incomplete because of partial 4th quarter data.

Homeless-involved crimes are most likely to occur outdoors.

Looking just at arrest data and leaving out crime report data, the predominant justice system encounter for homeless residents in Los Angeles was *loitering or sleeping in a public place*, accounting for 67 percent of homeless-involved arrests from 2010 through 2017.

Crimes against people were next, involving assault and battery, brandishing a weapon, rape, indecent exposure, resisting arrest, and homicide. These offenses accounted for 20 percent of homeless-involved crimes.

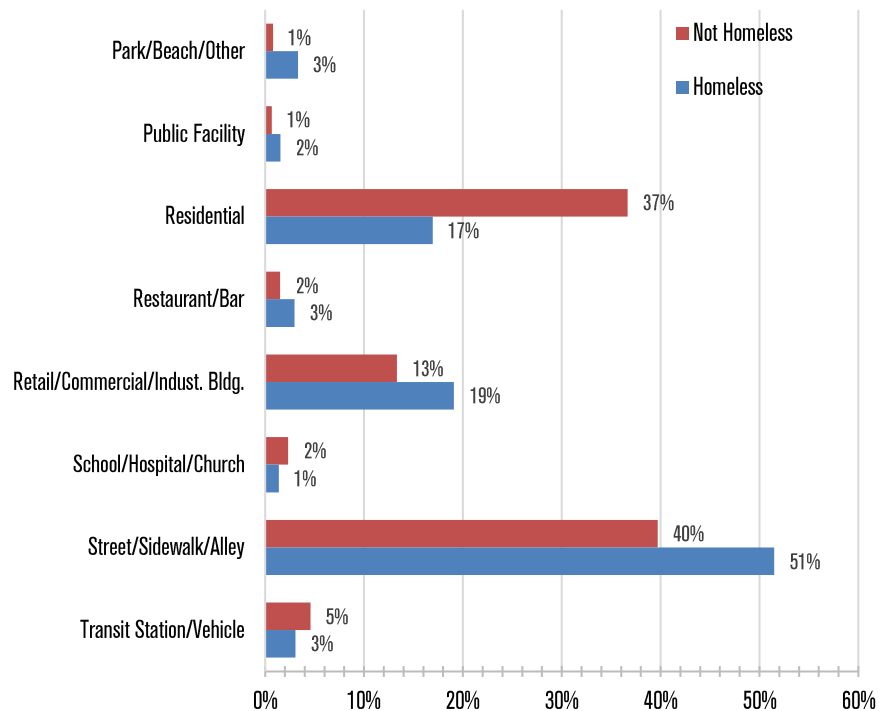
Larceny and *crimes against property*—offenses such as burglary, theft, arson, vandalism, and shoplifting—each accounted for 6 percent of homeless-involved crimes.

Arrests for *loitering or sleeping in public places* peaked in 2013, and the annual number had declined by nearly half in 2017. Homeless-involved *crimes against people* rose steadily from 2010 to 2017, with the annual number of reported offenses growing 671 percent.

Where Homeless-Involved Crimes Occur

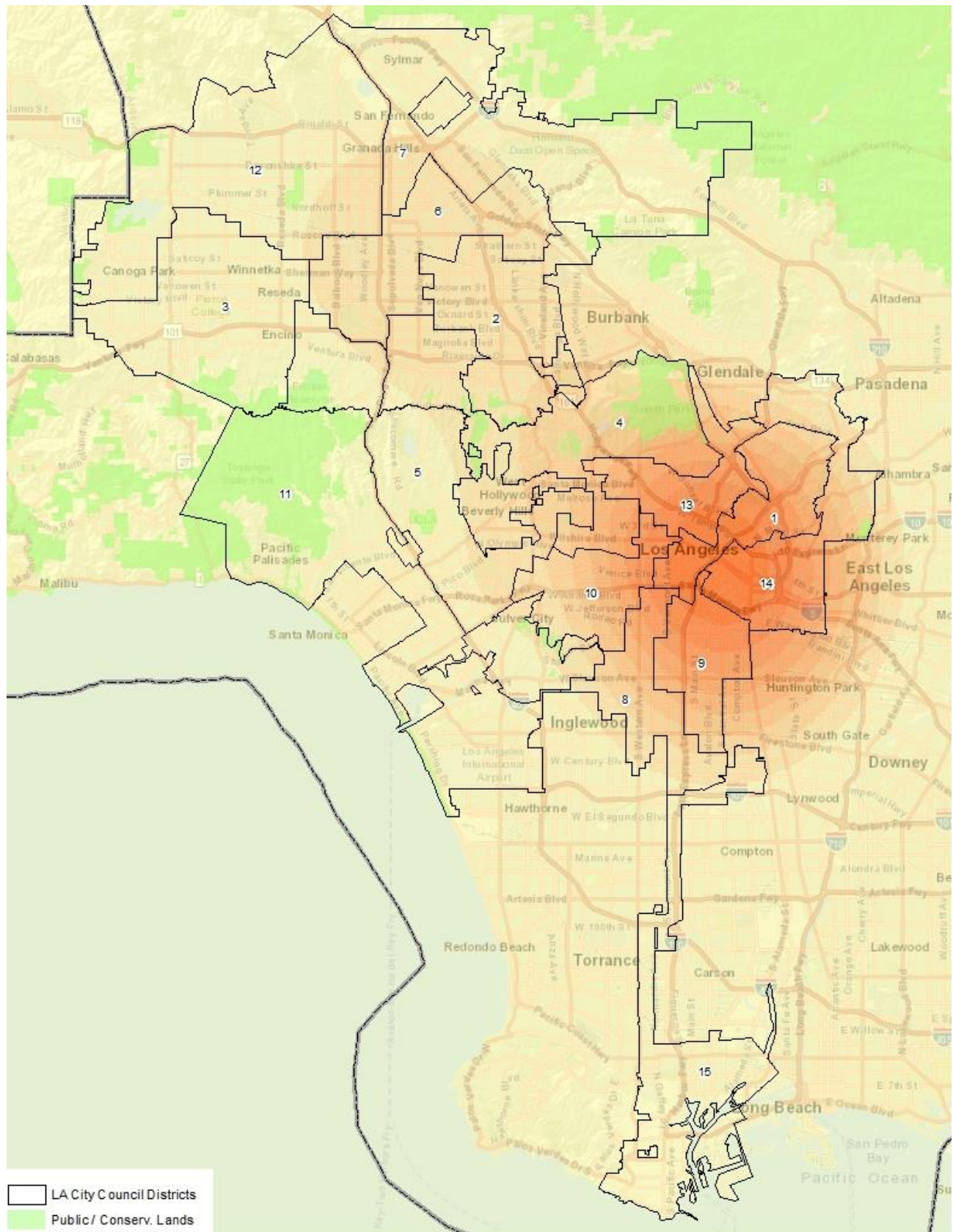
The type of premises in which homeless-involved as well as non-homeless-involved crimes occurred is shown in *Figure 38*. Homeless-involved crimes are more likely to occur outdoors in the streets, sidewalks, and alleyways of Los Angeles than non-homeless crimes (51 vs. 40 percent).

Figure 38: Premise Where Crimes Occurred in the City of Los Angeles, by Housing Status



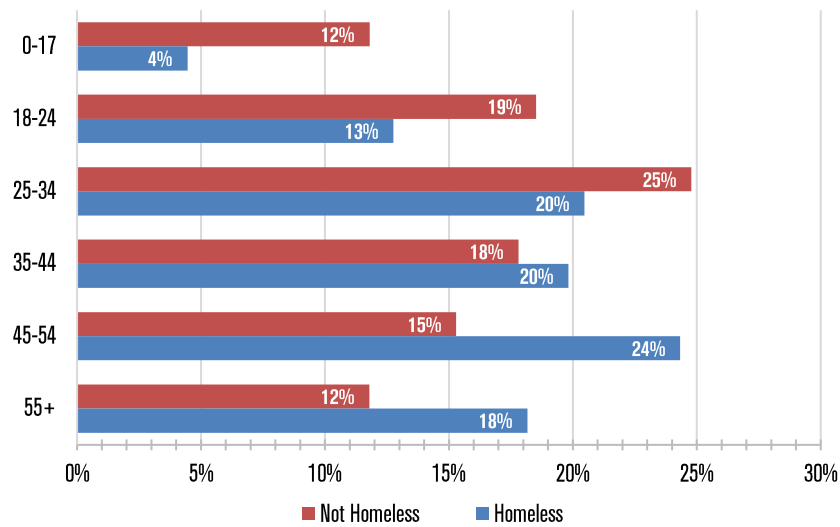
Source: Los Angeles Police Department, 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site. M.O. Codes 1218 and 2004 identify crimes where the victim and/or suspect, respectively, is homeless.

Figure 39: Heat Map of Homeless-Involved Crimes Reported and Arrests in the City of Los Angeles – Victims, Suspects and Arrestees, 2010-2017



Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Crime and Arrest Data from 2010 to Present. Downloaded from the Los Angeles Open Data web site. This graphic uses merged records for homeless persons from the LAPD Crimes and Arrests data.

Figure 40: Age of Persons Involved with Crimes in the City of Los Angeles – Victims, Suspects and Arrestees – by Housing Status



Source: Los Angeles Police Department. 2017. Los Angeles Open Data web site.

Homeless encounters with the police peak among individuals 45 to 54 years old.

Non-homeless crimes are more likely to occur in residences, including single family homes, apartments, senior housing, than homeless-involved crimes (37 vs. 17 percent).

There is a noteworthy but smaller difference in the share of crimes that took place in retail shops, commercial buildings and industrial properties. These crimes accounted for 19 percent of homeless-involved offenses vs. 13 percent of non-homeless offenses.

Surprisingly, transit stations and vehicles—including buses, Metro rail trains, and other modes—accounted for a smaller share of homeless-involved crimes than of non-homeless crimes (3 vs. 5 percent).

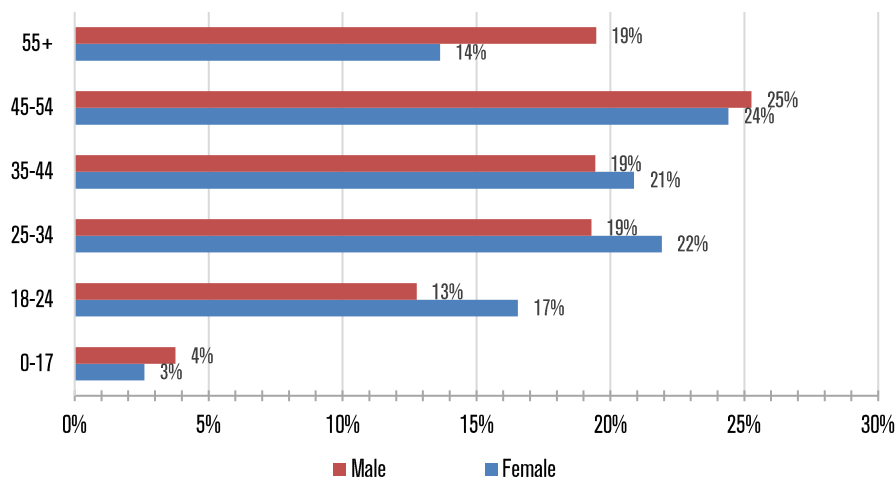
The location of cumulative homeless-involved crimes and arrests from 2010 to 2017 is shown by a heat map of crime data in *Figure 39*. The greatest concentration of justice system encounters for residents experiencing homelessness is in downtown Los Angeles, radiating out from Skid Row to almost every neighborhood and corner of the city.

Demographics of Homeless-Involved Victims and Suspects

Homeless residents' encounters with the police increase with age, peaking among individuals who are 45 to 54 years old. In contrast, non-homeless encounters with the police peak among individuals who are 25 to 34 years old and decrease thereafter. The higher frequency of justice system involvement among older homeless individuals appears to be associated with the duration of homelessness; older people have longer histories of homelessness. The age of both homeless and non-homeless persons in the City of Los Angeles who were involved with crimes, either as victims, suspects, or arrestees, is shown in *Figure 40*.

The age and gender of L.A. homeless residents who were involved with crimes as either victims, suspects, or arrestees are shown in *Figure 41*. The association of

Figure 41: Age and Sex of Homeless Residents Involved with Crimes in the City of Los Angeles – Victims, Suspects and Arrestees



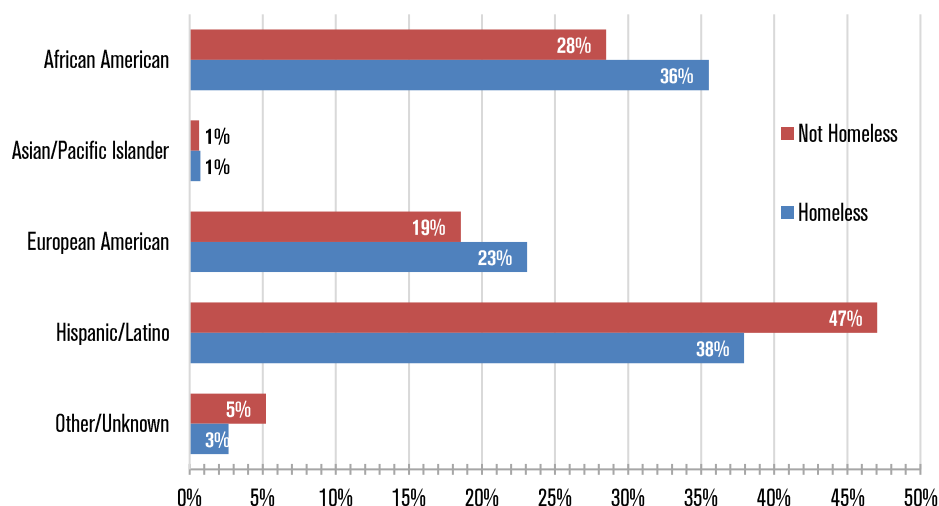
Source: Los Angeles Police Department, 2017. City of Los Angeles Open Data web site.

increasing age with increasing presence in crime data is true for both men and women through age 54. Involvement with crime drops off more sharply among women 55 years of age and older than among their male counterparts. A second thing that stands out is that a larger share women involved with crime are young—18 to 24 years old—than is the case for men (17 vs. 13 percent).

The ethnicity of persons in police records either as victims, suspects and arrestees is broken out by housing status in *Figure 42*. Compared to all crime victims and suspects, homeless African-Americans are over represented compared to housed African-Americans, 36 percent to 28 percent, respectively. Homeless European-Americans are also over represented, while all other ethnicity are underrepresented.

A larger share of women involved with crime are young—18 to 24 years old—than is the case for men.

Figure 42: Ethnicity of Persons Involved with Crimes in the City of Los Angeles – Victims, Suspects and Arrestees – by Housing Status



Source: Los Angeles Police Department, 2017. Crime and Arrest Data 2010 to 2017, Los Angeles Open Data web site.

Homeless-Involved Crime as a Share of All Crime

Crimes involving homeless individuals accounted for a small share of overall criminal activity in Los Angeles. From 2010 to 2017, the percent of total crimes involving homeless persons was:

- 0.4 percent Victim was homeless/transient
- 0.9 percent Suspect was homeless/transient
- 0.2 percent Both victim and suspect were homeless/transient

As the size of the homeless population has increased, the share of all crimes that were homeless-involved has increased slightly. In the most recent period for which data is available, January through November 2017, the percent of total crimes involving homeless persons was:

- 0.8 percent Victim is homeless/transient
- 2.5 percent Suspect is homeless/transient
- 0.4 percent Both victim and suspect are homeless/transient

Summary

One of the most consistent characteristics of homeless adults is a history of incarceration. Fifty-eight percent of men 25 years of age or older and 42 percent of women report having been incarcerated. A third of reported stints of incarceration are in state prison and the other two-thirds in county jail.

Although three-quarters did not have juvenile records and the onset of involvement in the criminal justice system occurred as adults, adult incarceration foreshadows homelessness for half of men and a third of women.

Prolonged exposure to homelessness is associated with an increased rate of incarceration. The frequency of incarceration histories is a quarter again higher among chronically homeless men than among those who are newly homeless, and half again higher among chronically homeless women than among those who are newly homeless.

Homeless residents are suspects in roughly one out of 50 crimes, and the victim in about one out of 100 committed in the City of Los Angeles. The predominant type of police encounter for homeless residents in Los Angeles has been loitering or sleeping in a public place, accounting for two-thirds of homeless-arrests from 2010 through 2017.

Homeless residents' encounters with the police increase with age, peaking among individuals who are 45 to 54 years old. In contrast, non-homeless encounters with the police peak among individuals who are 25 to 34 years old and decrease thereafter. The higher frequency of justice system involvement among older homeless individuals appears to be associated with the duration of homelessness; older people have longer histories of homelessness.

This points to the importance of continuing and expanding interventions for homeless individuals while they are incarcerated and more readily accessible for services and discharge planning.



Families and Children

Half of all homeless women and a third of homeless men report having children.

Homeless Parents and their Children

Half of all homeless women (50 percent) and a third (32 percent) of men report that they have children, as shown in *Figure 43*.¹⁹ But slightly less than one-in-ten (9 percent) are accompanied by a child. This includes 18 percent of women and 4 percent of men 18 years of age and older.

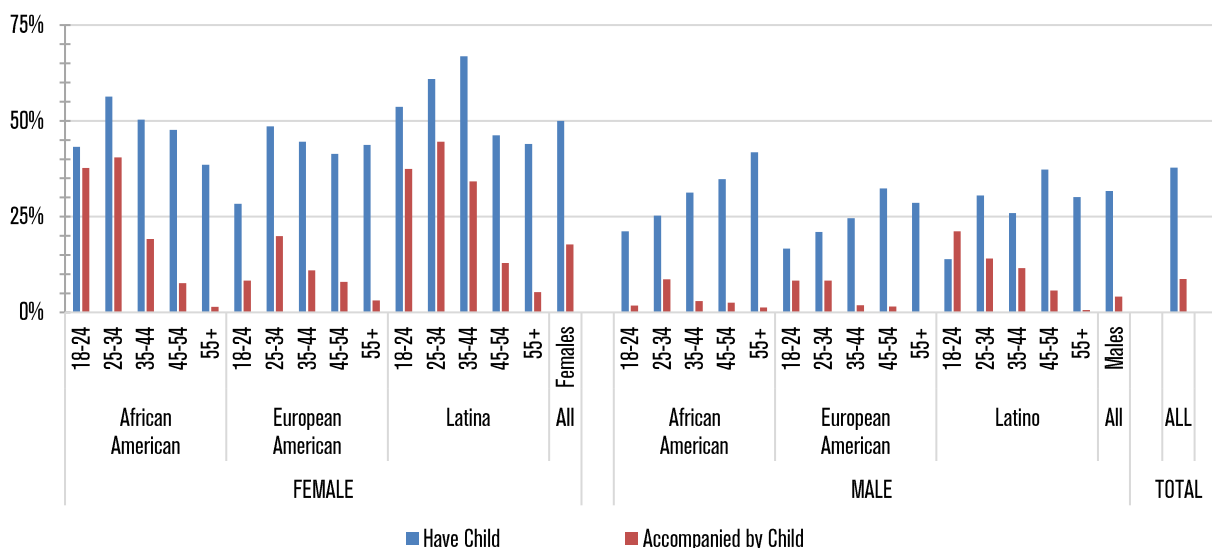
Among homeless women, Latinas are most likely to have and be accompanied by children (57 and 30 percent, respectively). African-American women are next most likely (49 and 18 percent, respectively). And then European-American women (43 and 11 percent, respectively). Just over a third (36 percent) of homeless women who have children are accompanied by children.

Among homeless men, African-Americans are the most likely to have children but very few are accompanied by children (35 and 3 percent, respectively). Latinos are next with a larger share accompanied by children (29 and 10 percent respectively). And then European-Americans (27 and 2 percent, respectively). Only 13 percent of homeless men who have children are accompanied by children.

A total of nine percent of homeless individuals 18 years of age and older report having a child in foster care and seven percent report having a child who is detained by the juvenile justice system, with a total of 14 percent having one or more children in one or both of these forms of institutional care, as shown in *Figure 44*.

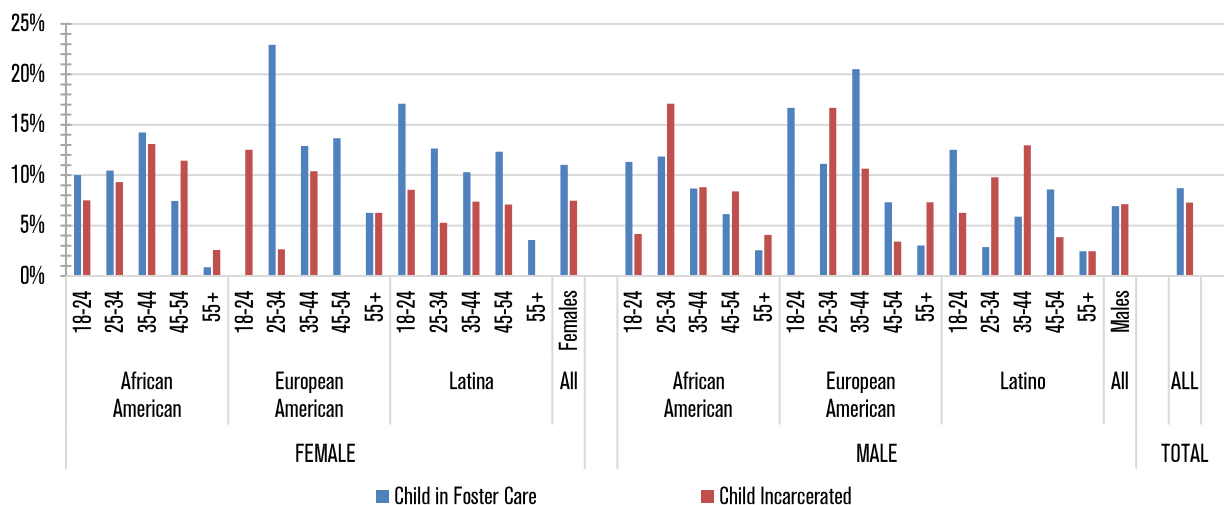
The highest rates of foster care placement of children are for European-Americans (23 percent for women 25 to 34 years old and 21 percent for men 35 to 44 years old). The highest rates of incarcerated children are for African-American and European-American men (both 17 percent). Women have higher rates of children in foster care than men (11 vs. 7 percent), and identical rates of children in juvenile detention (7 percent).

Figure 43: Adults who Have Children and are with Children



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2007 and 2009. Data shows adults 18 or more years of age.

Figure 44: Adults with Children in Foster Care or Incarcerated



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2007 and 2009. Data shows adults 18 or more years of age.

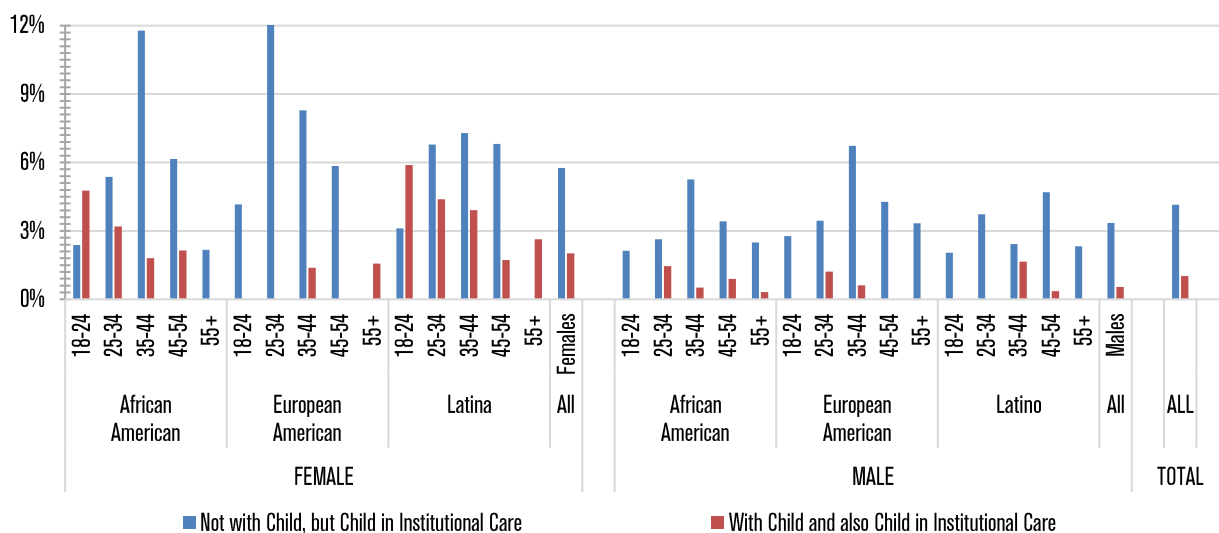
When we look at the share of individuals who are parents who have children in foster care or juvenile detention (institutional care), rather than the share of all adults, we get a different picture. Twenty-two percent of both women and men who are parents have a child in foster care. Fifteen percent of women and 22 percent of men who are parents have a child in juvenile detention. It appears that homeless fathers pass on a higher risk than mothers that their children will become involved with the juvenile justice system.

Overall, 36 percent of homeless parents (rather than of all homeless adults) have a child in institutional care (37 percent of men and 32 percent of women).

Four percent of homeless adults have a child in institutional care but are not accompanied by a child, as shown in Figure 45. This includes six percent of women and three percent of men. This rate goes up to 12 percent for European-American women 25 to 34 years old and of African-American women 35 to 44

36% of homeless parents have a child in institutional care.

Figure 45: Adults Accompanied by Child and/or with Child in Institutional Care



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2007, 2009. Data shows adults 18+ years. Institutional care is foster care or juvenile detention.

29% of homeless persons age 18-24 report that they were in foster care.

years old. Narrowing homeless adults down to just those who are parents, 11 percent have a child in institutional care but are not accompanied by a child.

One percent of homeless adults are accompanied by a child and also have a child in institutional care. This rate goes up to 3 percent when we narrow the population down to just those who are parents.

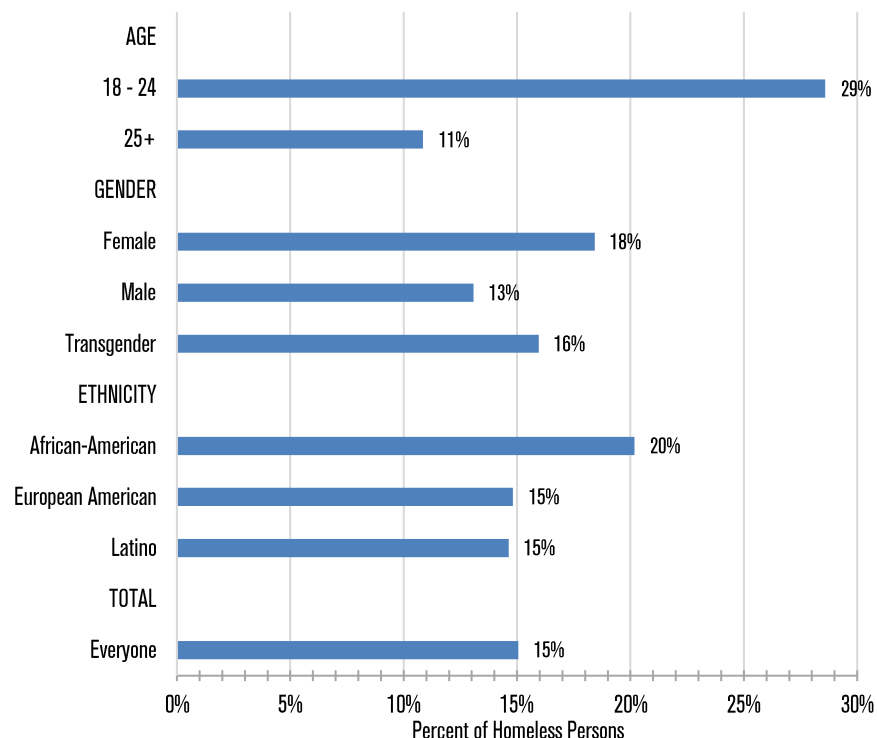
Looking at information in all three graphs, for every one homeless parent who is accompanied by a child, there are three other adults who are parents but not accompanied by a child (some of these children have grown up and become adults). And for every parent accompanied by a child, 1.5 parents have a child in institutional care: one parent has a child in foster care and slightly less than one parent (84 percent of one parent) has a child in juvenile detention. Because some parents have children in both forms of institutional care, the ratio is one to 1.5.

Homeless families are fragile. More are divided than remain intact. Given that many youth in institutional care are not successful in building a path to self-sufficient adulthood and are at risk of becoming second- or third-generation homeless, there is an important public interest in strengthening these families. This includes supporting parents in obtaining and keeping jobs, addressing behavioral health needs, and, where needed, developing successful parenting skills.

Foster Care History

It is noteworthy that the age range of 18 to 24, when the greatest number of people enter homelessness, was until recently the age at which youth emancipated

Figure 46: Homeless Persons with Foster Care History



Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2009, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017; HMIS data January 2015 and January 2016. Data is for individuals 18+ years of age.

from the housing and social services provided by foster care and probation. Fifteen percent of all homeless persons 18 years of age or older, and 29 percent of individuals 18 to 24 years of age, report that they were in foster care, as shown in *Figure 46*.

Since 2012, youth who are in foster care when they reach the age of 18 are able to receive housing, funding, and support services for three extra years, as long as they go to school, work, attend a job-readiness program or have a medical condition that prevents them from meeting these requirements. Roughly 80 percent of eligible youth take advantage of these extended benefits.

However, even with continued care, many foster youth become homeless between 18 and 24 years of age. *Figure 46* draws on data from 2009 through 2017, and within this data there is no indication of a decline in the share of 18 to 24 year old homeless individuals who report a history of foster care. Furthermore, data for both sheltered and unsheltered individuals from 2005 through 2017 does not show a decline in the share of the homeless population that is 18 to 24 years of age.²⁰ Youth transitioning out of foster care continue to be at high risk of homelessness.

Only 0.76 percent of all children in Los Angeles County are the foster care system in a given year,²¹ and roughly 1,200 youth who are 18 years of age or older leave the system each year.²² Yet this small share of the roughly 10,000,000 people living in the county make up a disproportionately large share of the homeless population (15 percent). The circumstances that lead to being removed from an individual's family and the experience of being in foster care create a high risk of homelessness.

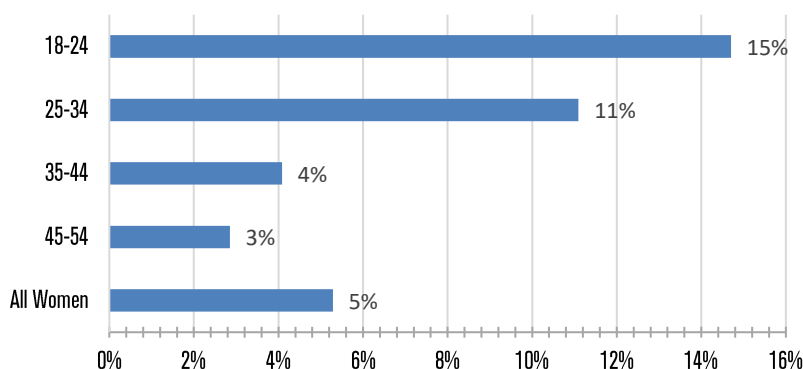
Questions that remain to be answered are how the age of entry into and exit from foster care, as well as the duration of foster care, affect risk of homelessness. We will address these questions in the next stages of research.

Pregnancy

Five percent of women living without shelter on the streets report that they are pregnant, as shown in *Figure 47*. The share who are carrying a child is highest among young women 18 to 24 years of age with 15 percent reporting being

15% of young women 18 to 24 years of age report being pregnant.

Figure 47: Percent of Unsheltered Women Who Are Currently Pregnant



Sources: LAHSA, 2009 and 2015 demographic surveys. Data is for unsheltered women 18 years of age and older.

77% of homeless families have a mother present; 23% have a father present.

pregnant. The rate of pregnancies decreases to 11 percent among women 25 to 34 years of age, four percent among women 35 to 44 years of age, and three percent among women 45 years of age or older.

Given that an estimated 18 percent of women are accompanied by a child (shown earlier in *Figure 43*), the share of unsheltered women who are pregnant and expecting a child is almost a third as large as those how have a child with them.

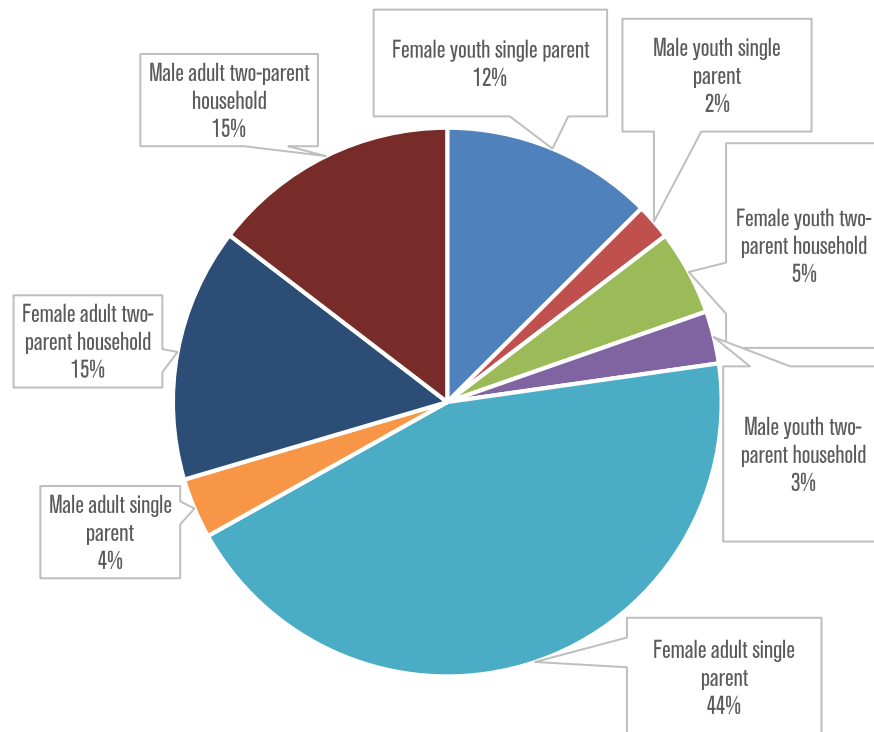
Structure of Families

Over three-quarters (77 percent) of homeless households with a child present also have a mother present, and slightly less than a quarter (23 percent) have a father present, as shown in *Figure 48*.²³

The predominant household structure is a single adult mother (44 percent). The second most common mode is two-parent adult families, accounting for 15 percent of both female and male adult parents. The third most common mode is single youth-mothers, 18 to 24 years of age who head 12 percent of households with children.

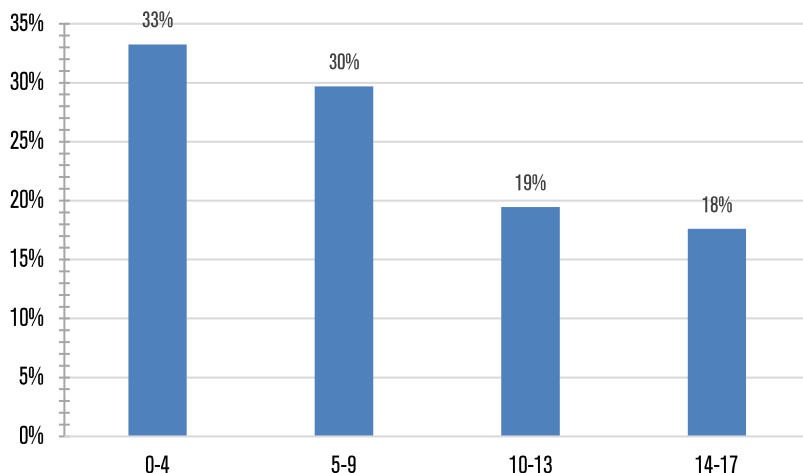
Single and two-parent youth households make up almost a quarter (23 percent) of households with children. These young parents still have the hope and energy of youth, yet are faltering in their transition to adulthood. They are an especially important group to support in obtaining jobs, subsidized childcare, and other needed assistance.

Figure 48: Structure of Parenthood



Sources: Average of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data for shelter residents in January 2013 and January 2016.

Figure 49: Age of Homeless Children



Sources: Average of HMIS data for January 2013 and January 2016.

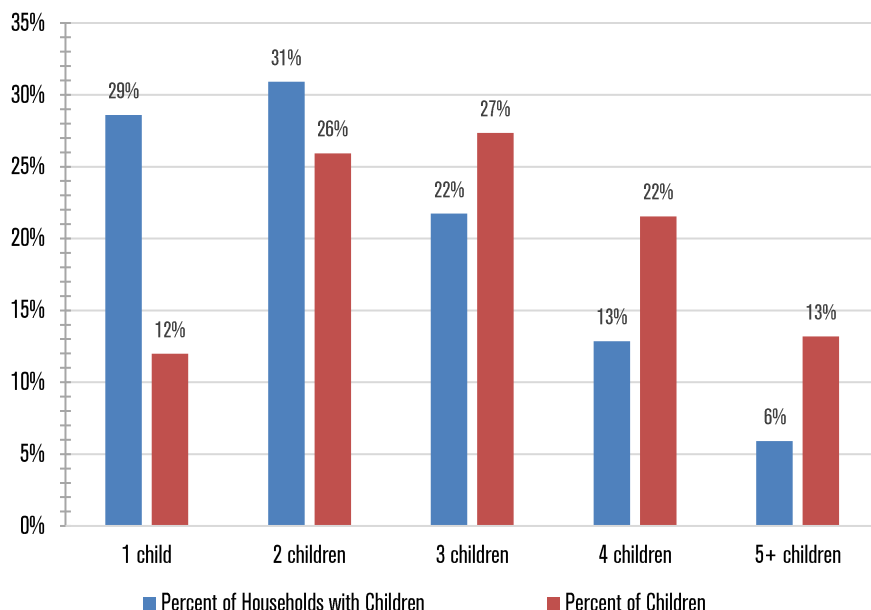
Age of Homeless Children

The largest share of homeless children (33 percent) are four years of age or younger, as shown in *Figure 49*. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) are under 10 years of age. As the age of children increases, they make up a progressively smaller share of children experiencing homelessness. This may be because their parents are also growing older and becoming better able to find means to obtain housing.

This downward trend in homelessness as children age appears to end when children reach legal adulthood at age 18. *Figure 19* showed that 18 to 24 years of age is the peak period for the onset of homelessness.

1/3 of homeless children are 0-4 years old and 2/3 are in households with 3+ children present.

Figure 50: Number of Children in Household



Sources: Average of HMIS data for January 2013 and January 2016.

57,000 elementary and secondary students experienced homelessness in the 2015-2016 academic year.

The information in this report does not show the strength of the link between homeless experiences as a child and adult homelessness. We need to learn more about how the age and duration of homelessness among children affects the risk of adult homelessness.

Number of Children in Household

The largest share of households with children have two children, but the largest share of children are in households with three children, as shown in *Figure 50*.

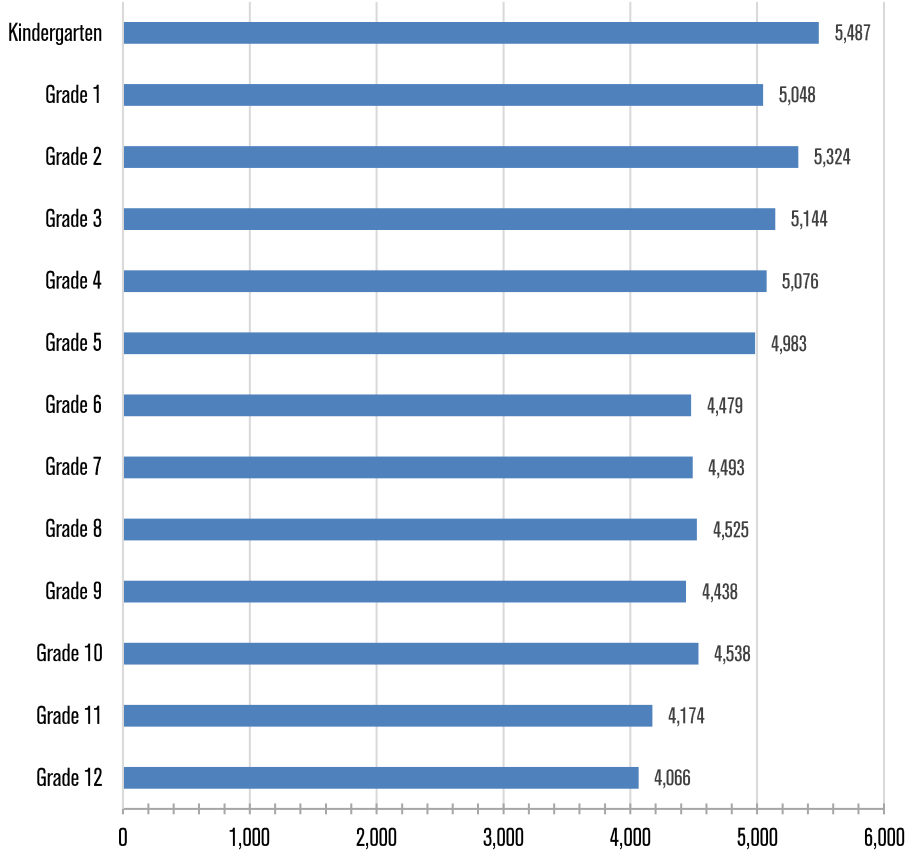
Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of children are in households with three or more children, although nearly two-thirds (60 percent) of households with children have only one or two children.

Homeless families are often large and if they are provided with housing, many families need three or four bedroom homes.

Homeless K-12 Students

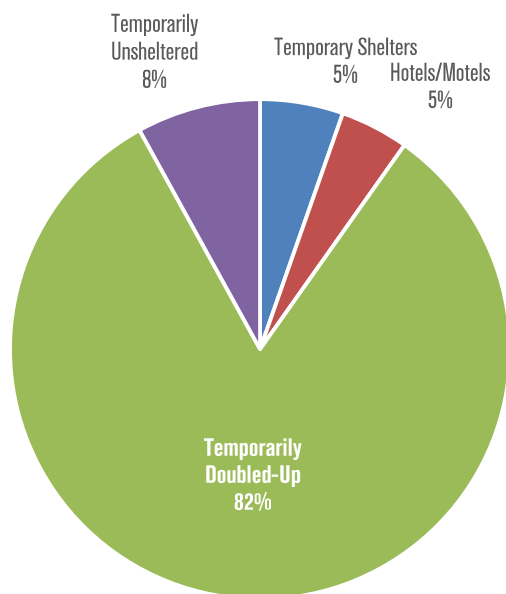
Over 57,000 elementary and secondary school students in Los Angeles County experienced homelessness during the 2015-2016 academic year. Student records

Figure 51: Homeless K-12 Students



Source: Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), Homeless Education Update: 2015-16 School Year.

Figure 52: Homeless K-12 Students by Nighttime Residence



Source: Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), Homeless Education Update: 2015-16 School Year.

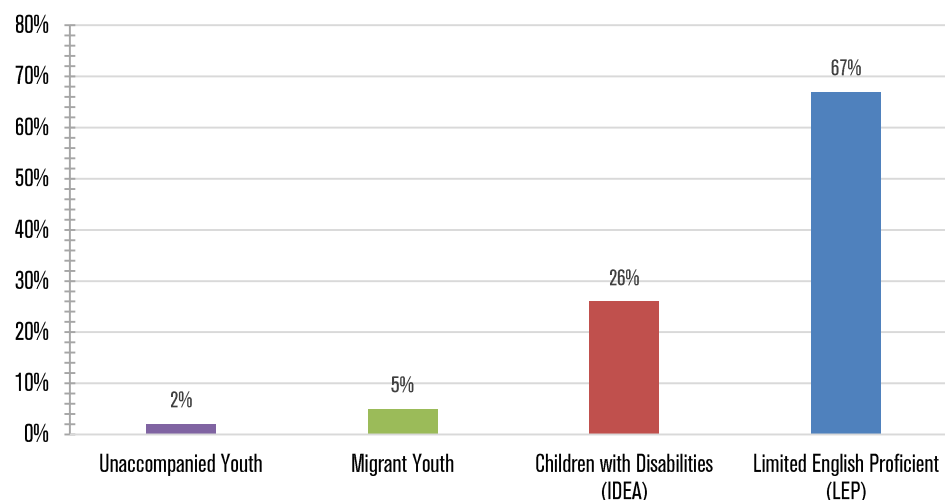
collected by public and chartered schools, and reported to the California Department of Education show that homelessness is most prevalent among younger children, particularly in grades five and under, as shown in *Figure 51*.

The lower numbers of homeless students in middle schools and high schools may be attributable to dropping out of school, but we don't know how frequent this is.

The definition of homelessness for students in these school-reported data are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.²⁴ This is broader than the HUD definition used in homeless counts because it includes individuals who are couch surfing, whereas the HUD definition includes only individuals sleeping in places not meant for human habitation.

18% of homeless K-12 students fit HUD's definition of homelessness.

Figure 53: Select Characteristics of Homeless K-12 Students



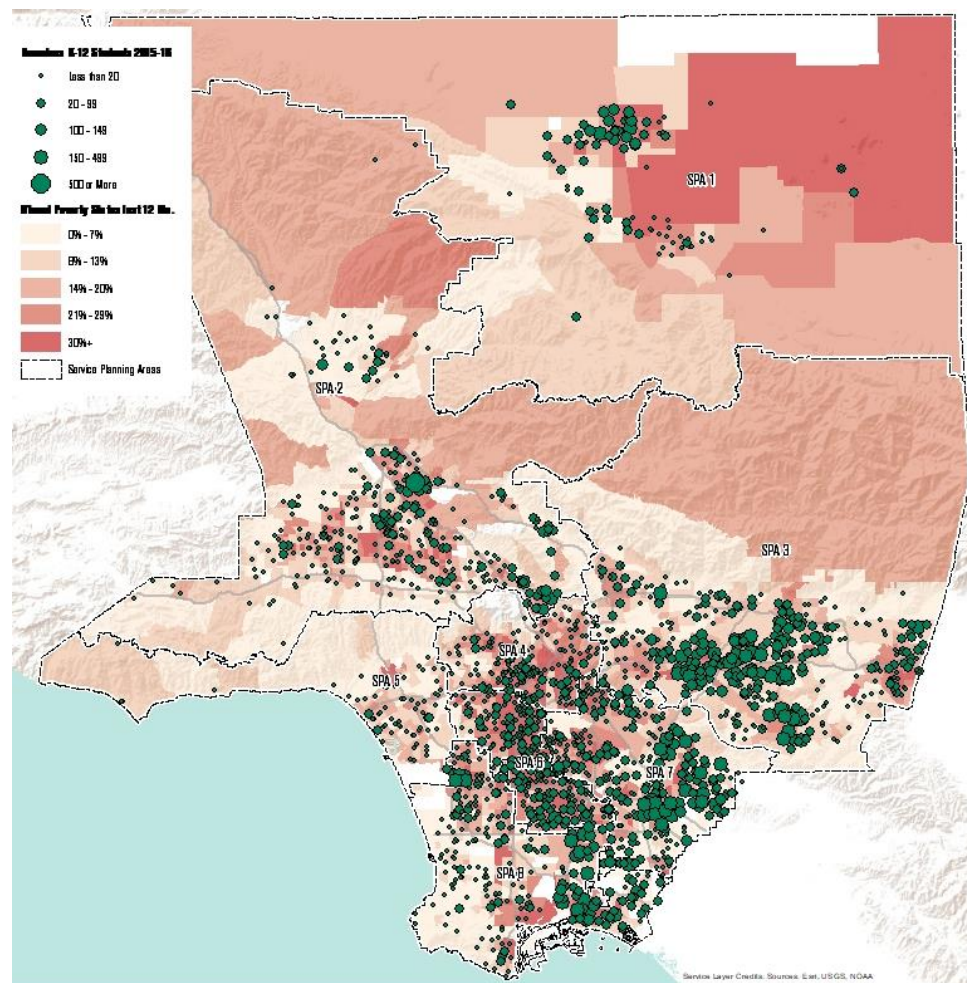
Source: Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), Homeless Education Update: 2015-16 School Year.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education reports that 82 percent of these homeless students are temporarily doubled up in housing that is not their own, such as at the houses of classmates and friends (*Figure 52*). Another eight percent are temporarily unsheltered, while five percent are in shelters and the remaining five percent are in hotels or motels (presumably with homeless vouchers).²⁵ The last three categories totaling 18 percent of homeless students are estimated to meet HUD’s definition of homelessness.

Among these homeless K-12 students, the Office of Education reports that 67 percent have limited English proficiency (suggesting that many are Latino), 26 percent have documented disabilities, five percent are migrant youth, and two percent are unaccompanied youth (*Figure 53*).

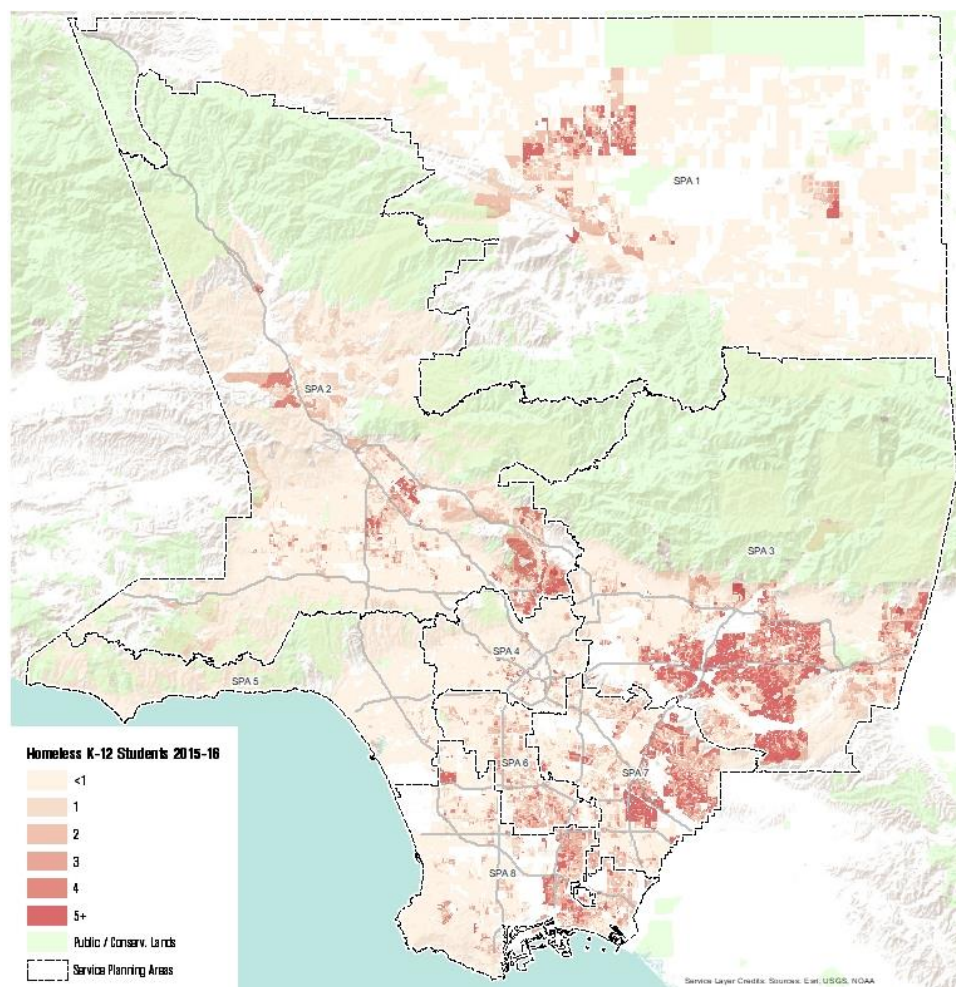
Across Los Angeles County, the number of homeless students is likely to be higher than indicated above because private schools report this data to the state on only a limited basis. Additionally, some school-aged youth experiencing homelessness may not be enrolled in school, for example, runaway children. Lastly, the data for homeless students in public schools is incomplete because of

Figure 54: Number of Homeless K-12 Students by School and Neighborhood Poverty Rate



Sources: California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, Homeless K-12 Students per School, 2015-16 School Year, obtained fall 2017. U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015, Table B17001, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

Figure 55: Density of Homeless K-12 Students, per Census Block



Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, Homeless K-12 Students per School, 2015-16 School Year. School data in this map are distributed across school attendance areas, proportionately based upon the total block populations in the 2010 U.S. Census.

non-reporting or late reporting, since some public schools do not appear in data on homeless students.

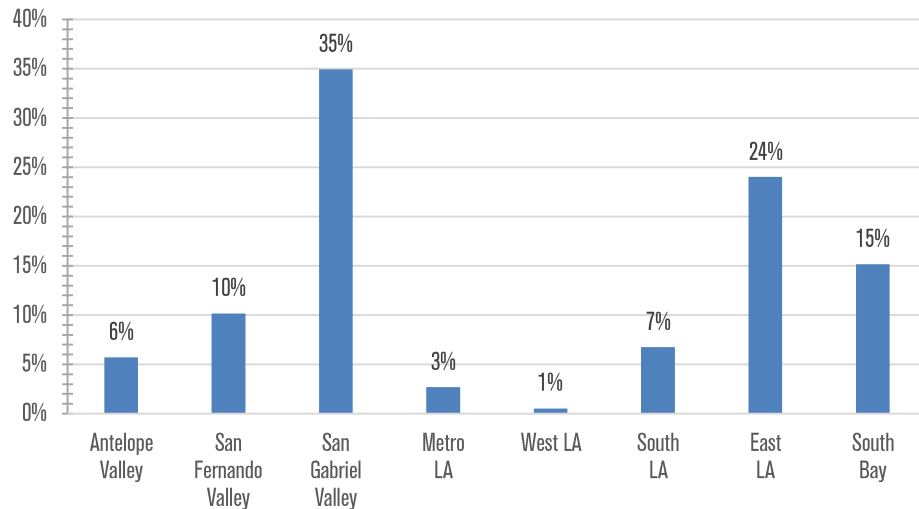
The geographic breakout of homeless students is based on the school that they attend. We assume that because of their limited financial resources and the likelihood of being temporarily doubling-up (couch surfing), they are likely to sleep nearby.

Large concentrations of homeless children are shown in the San Gabriel Valley, Southeast/Gateway Cities, South Los Angeles, and Long Beach in *Figures 54* and *55*. These cities are Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 3, 6, 7, and 8. There are also noticeable concentrations of homeless students in Inglewood, Pomona, Glendale, San Fernando and the Antelope Valley.

Each school's homeless student population is distributed across school attendance areas in *Figure 55* to map the density of homeless students per block. The San Gabriel Valley again shows a high concentration of homeless students.

Schools in the San Gabriel Valley report the most homeless students, 24% of the county total.

Figure 56: Distribution of Homeless Students by Service Planning Area (SPA) 2015-16



Sources: California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, Homeless K-12 Students per School, 2015-16 School Year.

The share of homeless students identified in each Service Planning Area is shown in *Figure 56*. Schools in the San Gabriel Valley reported just under 20,000 students experiencing homelessness, or 35 percent of the county total. East Los Angeles had the next largest number, over 13,700 homeless students, or 24 percent of the county total. SPAs with the lowest reported numbers were West Los Angeles at just over 300 (one percent) and Metro Los Angeles at just over 1,500 (three percent).

Children made up only about a tenth of the homeless population in LAHSA's 2016 homeless count, which projected that 3,490 children were homeless during the week of the count compared to an estimated 10,321 homeless students identified by schools over the course of the school year that met HUD's definition of homelessness (18 percent of 57,337 total homeless students). Given that the school tally is an annual number and the homeless count is a point-in-time number, the absolute number of children projected from the count may be reasonably compatible with school numbers.

School data shows a different geographic distribution than the homeless count. Given that school data includes over 550 times more records of homeless children than were obtained in the 2016 street count, it is likely to provide the most reliable information about the location of homeless children.

Summary

Half of all homeless women and a third of men report that they have children. Nearly a tenth of all homeless individuals 18 years of age and older are accompanied by a child, this includes nearly a fifth of women and a quarter as many men. Others have children in institutional care, and still others have children who have reached adulthood.

In addition to people who are already parents, one-in-twenty unsheltered women, including one-in-seven unsheltered women 18 to 24 years of age, report being

pregnant. The share of unsheltered women who are pregnant is almost a third as large as those who have a child with them.

For every one homeless parent accompanied by a child, 1.5 parents have a child in institutional care: one parent has a child in foster care and slightly less than one parent has a child in juvenile detention. Because some parents have children in both forms of institutional care, the ratio is one to 1.5.

Homelessness and institutional care are linked across generations. One-seventh of all homeless adults and nearly one-third of homeless youth 18 to 24 years of age, report that they were in foster care.

Youth-led households, that is, parents 18 to 24 years of age, make up almost a quarter of households with children. These young parents still have the hope and energy of youth, yet are faltering in their transition to adulthood. They are an especially important group to support in obtaining jobs, subsidized childcare, and other needed assistance.

Information from schools is valuable for identifying the communities in which children are homeless. Based on school reports for over 57,000 homeless elementary and secondary school students in Los Angeles County experiencing homelessness, a quarter of all homeless children reside in the San Gabriel Valley.

Homeless families are fragile. More are divided than remain intact. Given that many youth in institutional care are not successful in building a path to self-sufficient adulthood and are at risk of becoming second- or third-generation homeless, there is an important public interest in strengthening these families. This includes supporting parents in obtaining and keeping jobs, addressing behavioral health needs, and, where needed, developing successful parenting skills.



Work and Income

The number looking for a job is four times greater than the number with a job.

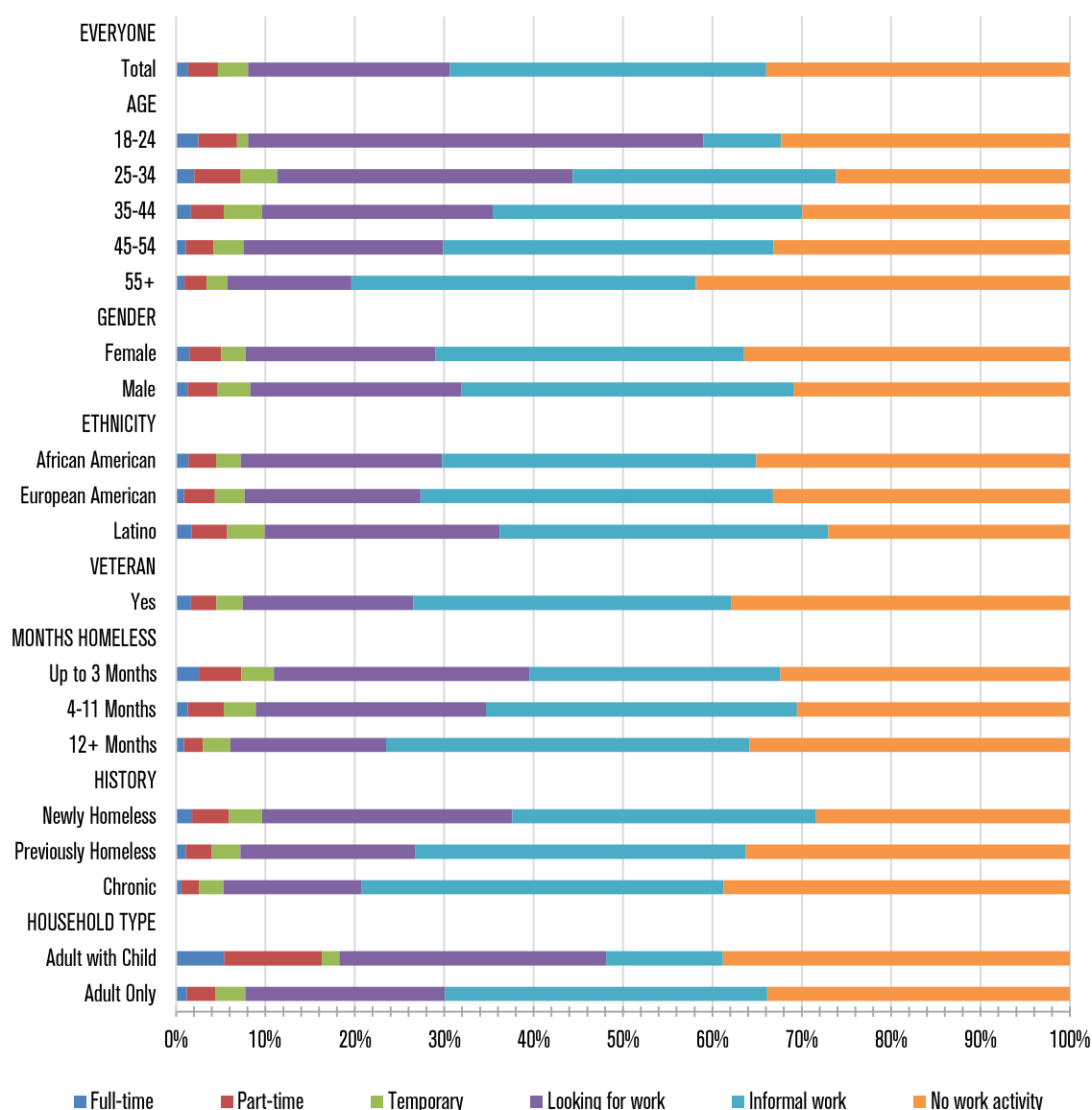
Employment Profile of Adults

The employment profile of homeless adults in *Figure 57* shows that efforts to participate in the formal labor force are largely in the form of job seeking rather than job holding. The number of individuals looking for a job is four times greater than the number with a job.

The major exceptions to this overall profile are young adults 18 to 24 years of age with 59 percent engaged with the formal labor market, parents with children with 49 percent engaged, and individuals who have been homeless for three months or less with 40 percent engaged. These three groups often overlap and are the low-hanging fruit for employment interventions. Employment effort declines steadily with age and duration of homelessness.

Overall, only one percent of the population report having full-time jobs, three

Figure 57: Employment Status of Unsheltered Homeless Adults



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2015, 2016 and 2017. Data shows adults 18 or more years of age.

percent part-time jobs, three percent temporary or seasonal jobs, 23 percent are looking for work, 35 percent work informally doing such things as recycling and panhandling, and 34 percent do not report any form of work activity.

Roughly two-thirds of all homeless groups report making efforts to generate an income, but as individuals age and are homeless for longer intervals, this effort shifts from the formal labor market to informal, economically marginal activities for making money.

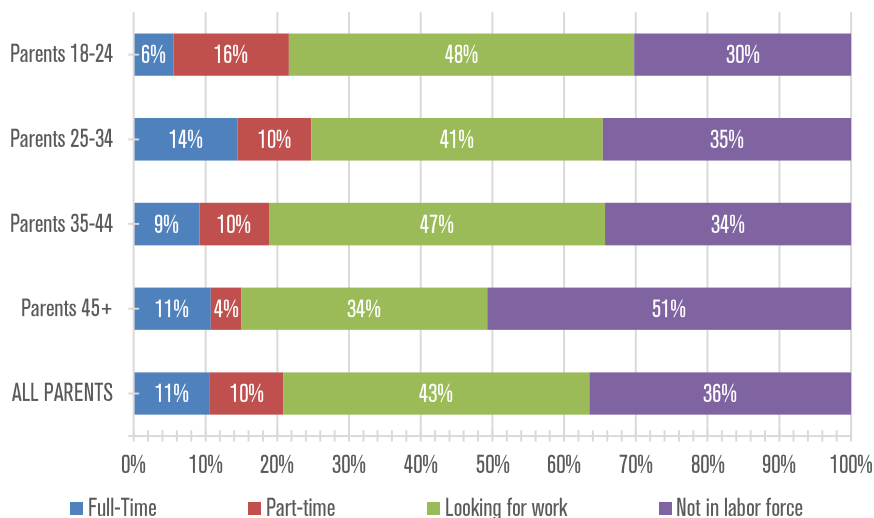
Employment Status Based on Parents' Age

Two-thirds of homeless parents in shelters (64 percent) report that they are in the labor market, with 11 percent reporting full-time jobs, 10 percent part-time jobs, and 43 percent looking for work, as shown in *Figure 58*. Labor force participation rates are highest among the youngest parents and decrease with age. Actual employment rates are highest among parents 25 to 34 years of age, and include almost a quarter of this group (24 percent).

The cost to society of a homeless family, including possible long-term adverse impacts on children, may well exceed the cost of underwriting jobs for parents who want to work but are unemployed or at best marginally employed.

Young adults, parents with young children and newly homeless individuals are the low hanging fruit for employment interventions.

Figure 58: Employment Status of Parents by Age of Parent

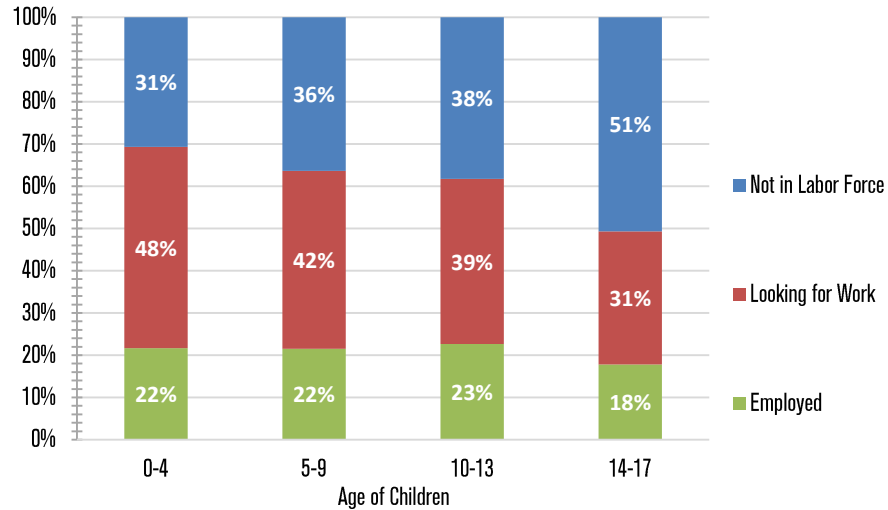


Source: HMIS data for January 2016.

Employment Status Based on Children's Age

The rate of job seeking and employment is highest among parents of the youngest children, as shown in *Figure 59*. Sixty-nine percent of parents of children 0 to 4 years of age are working or looking for work. This rate drops to 49 percent for parents of children 14 to 17 years of age. As children grow older, parents also grow older and their efforts to find work diminish, as shown in *Figure 58*. Given that the overall high level of effort by homeless parents to find employment, and the especially high effort by young parents of preschool children, subsidized childcare is needed to enable parents to hold jobs.

Figure 59: Employment Status of Parents by Age of Children



Source: HMIS data for January 2016.

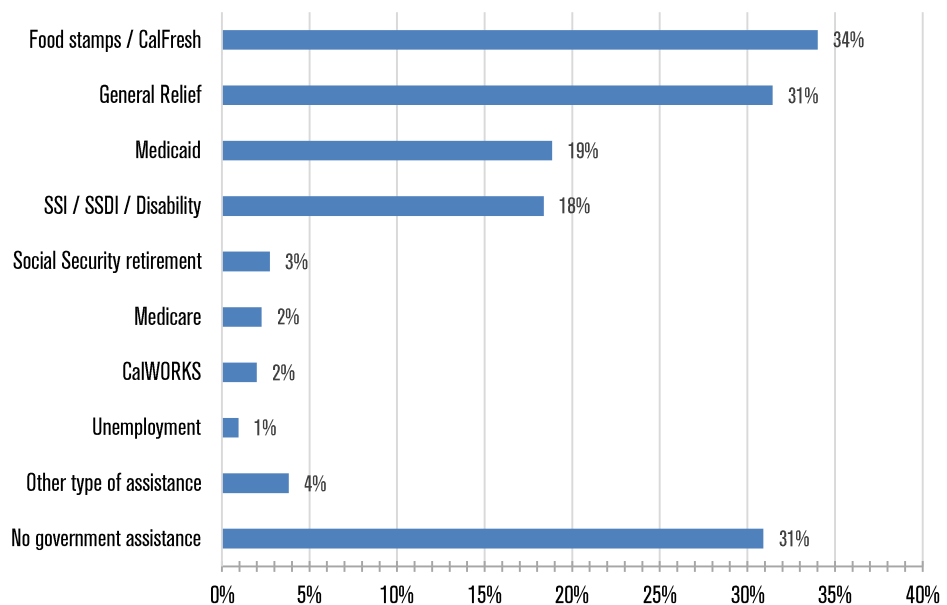
Government Assistance

31% of homeless individuals receive no government assistance.

In the absence of earned income, homeless individuals are dependent on government assistance for survival. Fifty-two percent of unsheltered individuals report receiving some type of public cash benefit, as shown in *Figure 60*. Monthly cash benefits include General Relief (\$218 average), CalWORKS (\$570 average), SSI or SSDI (\$644 average), Social Security retirement (\$40 minimum), and Unemployment Insurance (\$173 minimum).²⁶

Sixty percent of the individuals receiving cash benefits are aided by Los Angeles County's General Relief program, which provides a maximum grant of \$221 a

Figure 60: Rate of Coverage by Government Assistance Programs



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Unweighted data. Some individuals receive more than one type of benefit so total coverage shown exceeds 100 percent.

month plus food stamps (CalFresh).

Los Angeles County provides General Relief benefits to a larger share of the indigent population than any other urban county in California, but the \$221 maximum aid amount is small compared to the cost of housing and other basic necessities.²⁷ General Relief can make an important contribution to an integrated system-wide response to homelessness, but by itself is likely to be inadequate to support an exit from homelessness.

Seventeen percent of unsheltered individuals report receiving only non-cash public assistance in the form of food stamps (CalFresh) and/or Medicaid health insurance. The remaining 31 percent report that they do not receive benefits of any kind

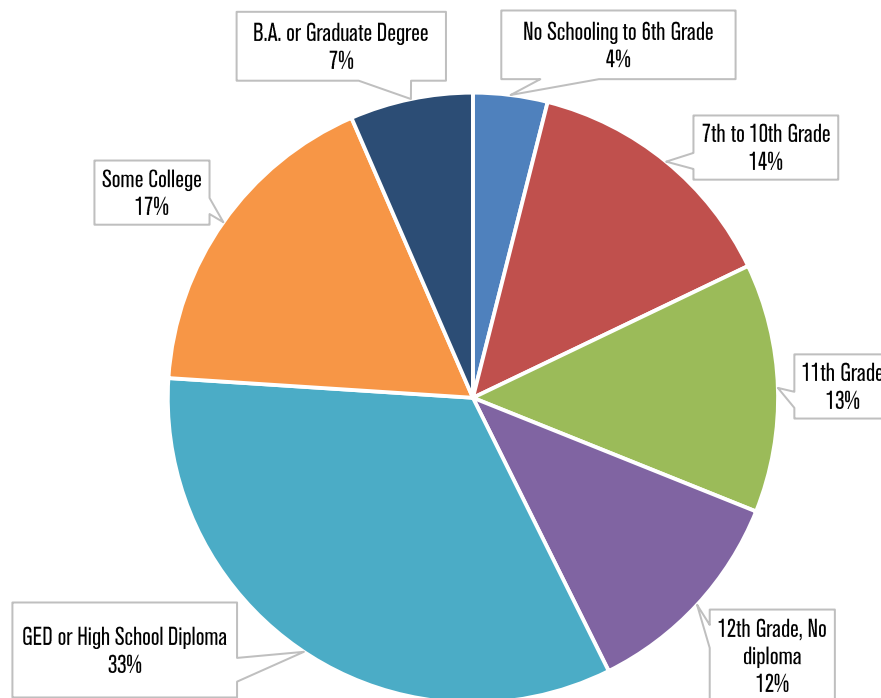
Only one-fifth of unsheltered individuals are enrolled in a public assistance program providing cash benefits that might be sufficient to pay for housing. Possible paths for the other four-fifths to obtain a sustainable income include: 1) qualifying for a SSI benefits if a disability that precludes employment can be documented, 2) obtaining placement in permanent supportive housing that does not require a minimum rent amount, or 3) obtaining employment.

70% of homeless residents age 18+ reported having at least a high school degree.

Educational Attainment

For most Los Angeles residents, the ages of 25 to 54 represent prime working years. The destitute condition of homeless residents in this age range represents a loss of productive potential.

Figure 61: Highest Level of Education Completed



Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA 2017 demographic survey and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data for shelter residents in January 2013. Data is for persons 18+ years of age.

The typical monthly income for unsheltered individuals is \$236.

Over half (57 percent) of homeless individuals who are 18 years of age or older report having at least a high school degree and almost a quarter (24 percent) report some level of college education, as shown in *Figure 61*. These educational attainments typically enable individuals to be part of the labor force and consistently earn an income. It is important for homeless individuals and the entire community to support and restore this productive potential whenever possible.

Monthly Income

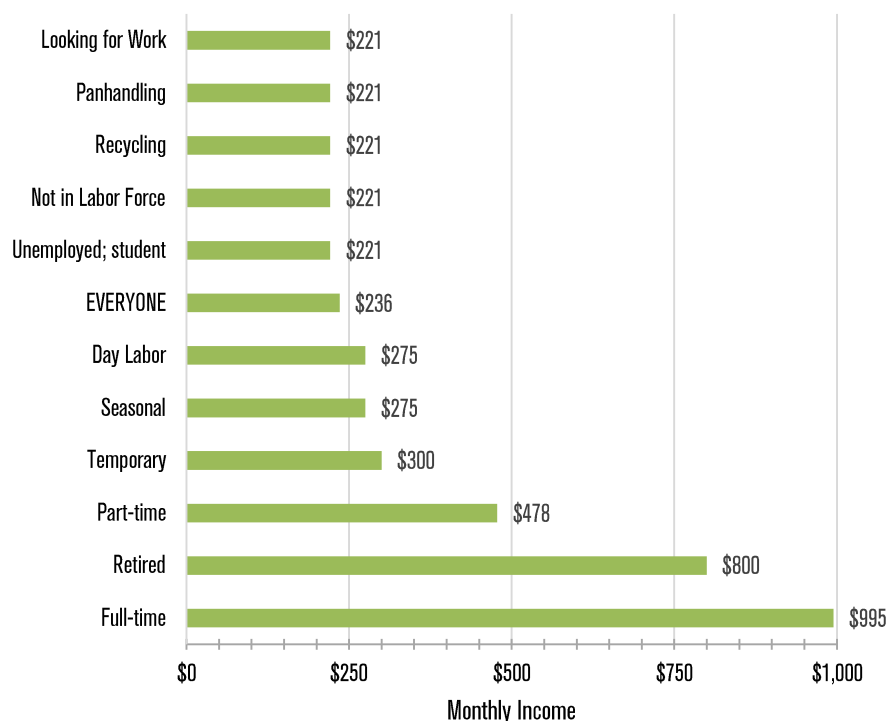
The median monthly income for unsheltered homeless individuals 18 years of age and older is \$236, slightly more than the maximum General Relief cash aid amount of \$221, as shown in *Figure 62*.

The minimum wage in Los Angeles in 2017 was \$12 an hour. Full-time work should bring about \$2,000 a month in wages, which is more than double the income reported by individuals who said they were employed full-time. This suggests that the jobs held by homeless workers may often be “off the books.”

Homeless workers rarely have year-round jobs, but if we annualize their monthly earnings based on a scenario of continuing employment, the part-time workers would have annual incomes of \$5,736 and full-time workers would have incomes of \$11,940.

The federal poverty threshold is currently \$12,060 a year in income for one person. For two people it is \$16,240, and it goes up roughly \$4,200 for each additional person.²⁸ The income of the typical homeless individuals with a full-

Figure 62: Monthly Income by Employment Status



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Data is for individuals 18+ years of age. Median monthly income from all sources is shown.

time job is well below the poverty threshold.

Acute poverty is the most defining characteristic of people experiencing homelessness. The incomes of homeless residents explain why they are unable to obtain a place of their own to live, particularly given the high cost of living and of housing in Los Angeles County. Increasing the incomes of employable adults through jobs that pay at least the minimum wage is needed as a primary strategy for addressing homelessness.

Barriers to Employment

The two most recent demographic surveys that were conducted as part of the homeless count asked unsheltered individuals to identify the barriers to getting stable work. The responses are shown in *Figure 63*.

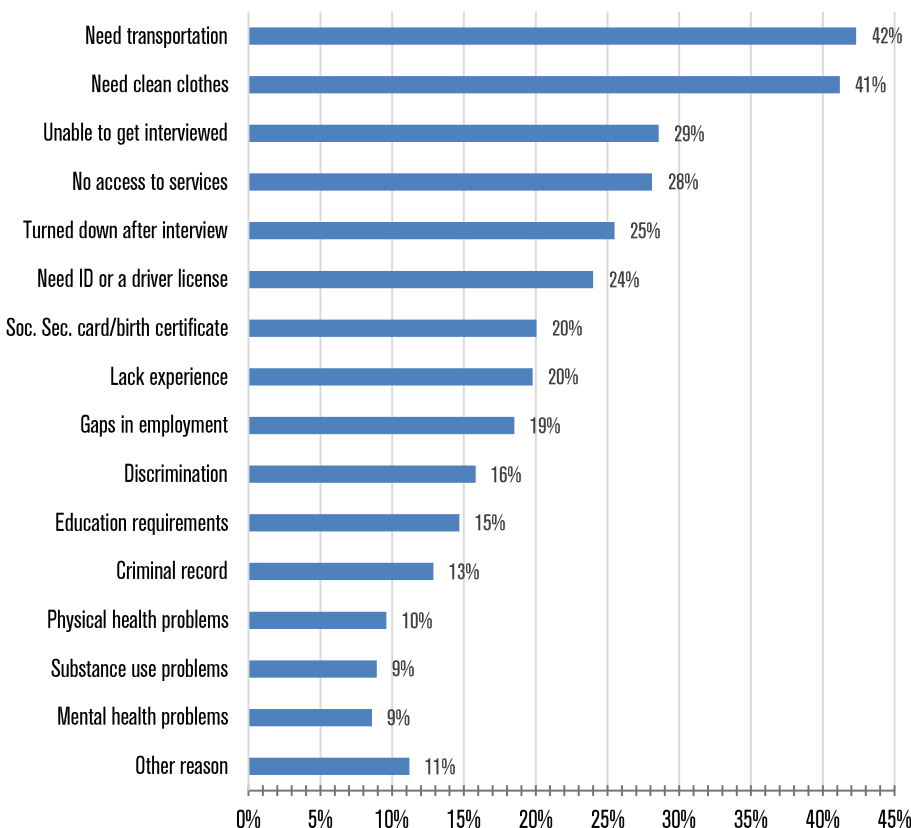
The two most frequently identified barrier appear readily surmountable—transportation for commuting to work (42 percent) and clean clothes (41 percent).

Two barriers describe difficulty successfully competing for a job—unable to get interviewed (29 percent) and turned down after interview (25 percent).

Three barriers describe skill and experience limitations: lack experience (20 percent), gaps in employment (19 percent), and education requirements (15 percent).

The barriers to employment identified most often are transportation and clean clothes.

Figure 63: Barriers to Getting Stable Work



Sources: Average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2016 and 2017. Unweighted data.

Three barriers indicate fundamental obstacles to employment: physical health problems (10 percent), substance use problems (9 percent), and mental health problems (9 percent).

It is likely that some of these self-assessments underestimate actual barriers to obtaining sustaining employment. Nevertheless, many of the identified barriers are not permanent impediments, but rather logistical obstacles or needs for skill development that can feasibly be addressed.

Discrimination

Given the massive ethnic disparities in homelessness, any employment-based intervention will have to address the discrimination and isolation that are barriers to sustaining employment for many African Americans, particularly men. One type of barrier is isolation from the informal social networks in which job opportunities are shared by word of mouth or social media.

A large study of employment discrimination in California identified pervasive invisible obstacles to employment, especially for African Americans.²⁹ Many African-American men do not even get to the point of being subjected to either conscious or implicit discrimination because they are isolated from the informal networks that dominate hiring in many job markets.

Many individuals have no access to employment networks as a result of ethnicity, homeless status, justice system status, and family background. Their entry into the labor market will need to be facilitated by strong financial incentives for employers to hire them and assess their long-term productive potential.

Employment Intervention

Most employment interventions will need to include wage subsidies, sometimes temporary and other times long-term. For some individuals the employment solution will need to be in the form of a subsidized public job. Whether private or public, the jobs that are provided will need to pay living wages that enable individuals to pay for housing.

The financial analysis that is part of developing the triage tool for targeting employment interventions includes looking at the public costs for both the individual and her or his children when employed, earning an income and housed compared to costs when unemployed and homeless. The amount of public costs that are avoided when employed can be seen as offsetting the cost for employment subsidies and other needed services.

Considering that many of the people who are most interested in employment are parents, the multi-generational costs to society when those parents are marginalized and lack stability builds a strong case for the cost-effectiveness of targeted employment subsidies. There is a similarly strong

case for young adults and recently homeless individuals with employment histories.

Other essential components of an integrated employment intervention include temporary housing, child care, transportation, clothing, behavioral health care, and interim income maintenance while waiting for a paycheck.

Summary

Efforts to participate in the formal labor force are largely in the form of job seeking rather than job holding. The number of individuals looking for a job is four times greater than the number with a job.

Roughly two-thirds of all homeless groups report making efforts to generate an income, but as individuals age and are homeless for longer intervals, this effort shifts from the formal labor market to informal, economically marginal activities.

The major exceptions to this profile are young adults 18 to 24 years of age, parents with children, and individuals who have been homeless for three months or less. These three groups often overlap and are the low-hanging fruit for employment interventions.

Almost three-quarters of homeless adults report having at least a high school degree and one-quarter report some level of college education. This level of educational attainment typically enables individuals to be part of the labor force and consistently earn an income.

Los Angeles County provides General Relief benefits to a larger share of the indigent population than any other urban county in California, but the \$221 maximum aid amount is small compared to the cost of housing and other basic necessities. General Relief can make an important contribution to an integrated system-wide response to homelessness, but by itself is likely to be inadequate to support an exit from homelessness.

The median monthly income reported by unsheltered adults is \$236, slightly more than the maximum General Relief amount.

Only one-fifth of unsheltered individuals are enrolled in a public assistance program providing cash benefits that might be sufficient to pay for housing. Possible paths for the other four-fifths to obtain a sustainable income include: 1) qualifying for a SSI benefits if a disability that precludes employment can be documented, 2) obtaining placement in permanent supportive housing that does not require a minimum rent amount, or 3) obtaining employment.

Homeless workers rarely have full-time, year-round jobs, but if we annualize the monthly earnings of those who report having full-time work, their earnings are below the federal poverty threshold. Increasing the incomes of employable adults through jobs that pay at least the minimum wage is needed as a primary strategy for addressing homelessness.

Given the massive ethnic disparities in homelessness, any employment-based intervention must address the discrimination and isolation that are barriers to sustaining employment for many African Americans, particularly men.

Opening a door to sustaining jobs for homeless adults will often require strong financial incentives for employers to hire them and help them master their jobs. Other essential components of an integrated employment intervention include temporary housing, child care, transportation, clothing, behavioral health care, and interim income maintenance while waiting for a paycheck.

Considering that many of the people who are most interested in employment are parents, the multi-generational costs to society when those parents are marginalized and lack stability builds a strong case for the cost-effectiveness of targeted employment interventions. There is a similarly strong case for young adults and recently homeless individuals with employment histories.



Chronic Homelessness

Rate of Chronic Homelessness

Thirty percent of the point-in-time homeless population is estimated to be chronically homeless. The share of the homeless population reported to be chronically homeless has varied from year to year in homeless count data, as shown in *Figure 64*. The rate shown in demographic surveys of unsheltered individuals that provide this information has ranged from 28 to 39 percent.

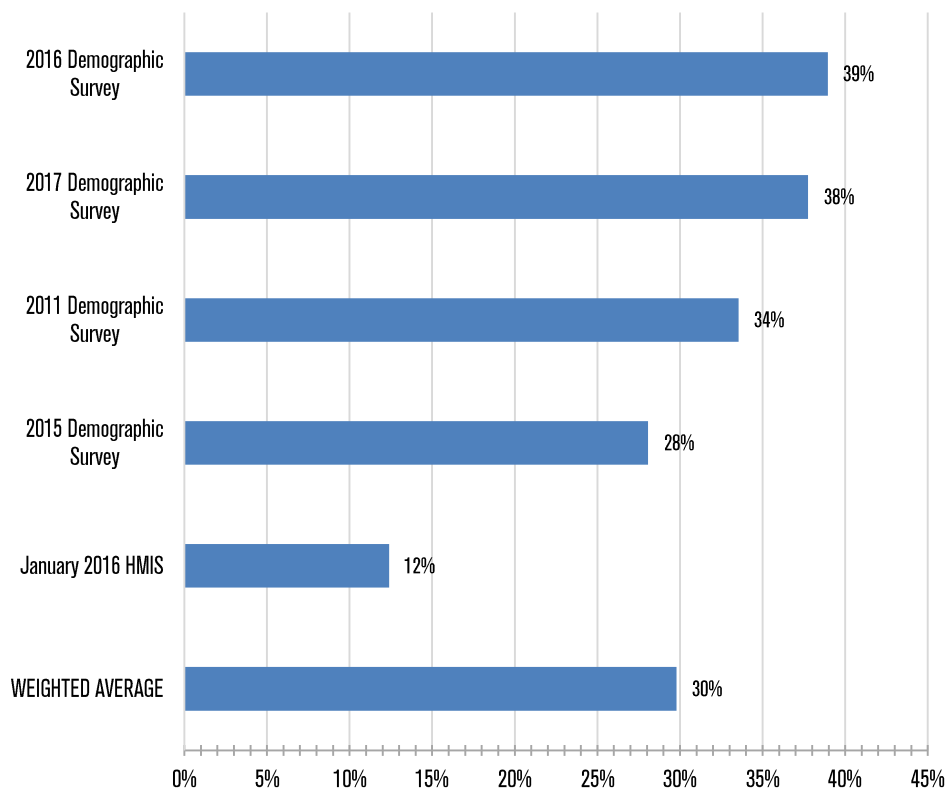
Another source of differing data is from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for individuals in shelters at the time of the count. HMIS data for January 2016 shows only 12 percent to be chronically homeless.

This variation does not correspond with regional economic trends and is most likely the result of sampling inconsistencies in the populations surveyed in different years.

The demographic surveys from the four most recent homeless counts show an average of 35 percent of the point-in-time population 18 years of age or older to be chronically homeless. When the 2016 HMIS data is included, the average drops to 30 percent. The demographic surveys appear to under-represent newly homeless individuals and shelter data appears to under-represent chronically homeless individuals. Given this, the 30 percent average is a reasonable benchmark for chronic homelessness.

30% is a
reasonable
benchmark for
chronic
homelessness.

Figure 64: Chronically Homeless as Percent of Point-in-Time Homeless Population



Sources: "WEIGHTED AVERAGE" shown in chart is weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2011, 2015, 2016, and 2017, and HMIS data 2016. Data is for individuals 18+ years of age.

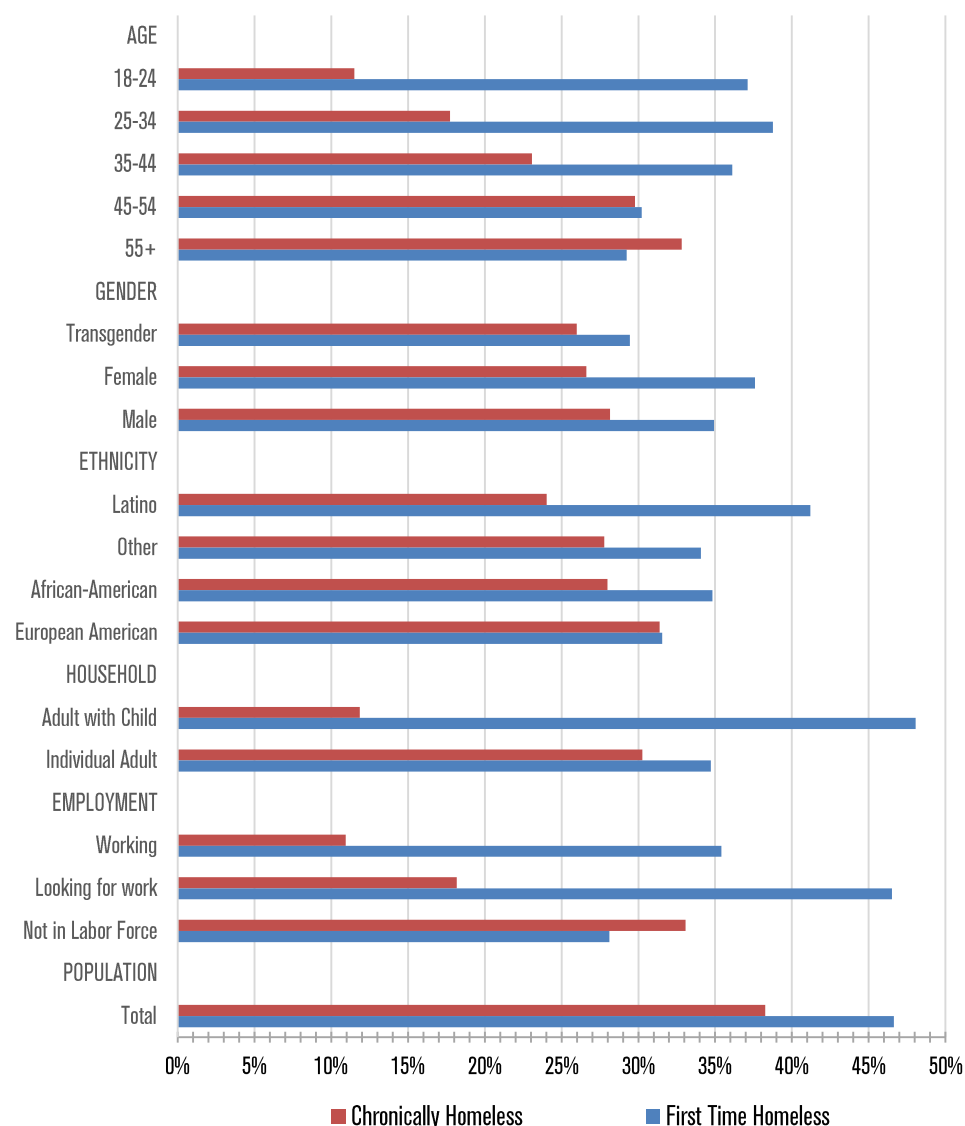
First-time Homeless vs Chronically Homeless

Chronically homeless individuals look least like individuals who are homeless for the first time based on age, household structure and employment status, as shown in *Figure 65*. Rates of chronic homelessness increase with age whereas rates of new entrants into homelessness decrease with age. Far fewer chronically homeless individuals are part of families with children, or working or are looking for work.

Similar rates of chronic homelessness across homeless individuals in all ethnic and gender groups show that even though unequal social conditions propel more men and African-Americans into homelessness, once homeless, the risk that this will become a chronic condition is shared equally.

Once homeless,
the risk of
becoming
chronically
homeless is
shared equally
across all ethnic
groups.

Figure 65: Rates of First-time and Chronic Homelessness within Population Groups



Sources: Weighted average of LAHSA demographic surveys 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017; HMIS data January 2016. Data is for individuals 18+ years of age. Individuals who are neither first-time nor chronically homeless are not shown.

Chronically
homeless
individuals have
worse health,
more frequent
arrest histories,
are more likely to
live on the street,
and less likely to
seek employment.

Attributes that Differentiate Chronically Homeless Individuals

Four major distinctions between chronically homeless individuals and new entrants into homelessness were identified earlier in this report:

1. Interest in developing skills and *finding a job* diminishes by the time people become chronically homeless. It is very important for 71 percent of people who are homeless for the first time, but only 57 percent of individuals who are chronically homeless (*Figure 21*).
2. Every reported *health* condition is two to three times more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals than among first-time homeless. Serious mental illness was reported most frequently—55 vs. 21 percent for chronic and first-time homeless, respectively (*Figure 22*).
3. Chronically homeless individuals are much less likely to find refuge in a *shelter* than non-chronically homeless individuals—6 vs. 34 percent. (*Figure 24*).
4. *Justice system* histories are more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals. Two-thirds of chronically homeless men (65 percent) and half of chronically homeless women (52 percent) have been incarcerated (*Figure 33*).

Using Linked Administrative Records for Targeted Interventions

When individuals experience homelessness, they fall off the data grid because most information collected by public agencies is based on place of residence, for example, the Census Bureau. Individuals who are placeless are left out of these data. However, each encounter of a homeless person with a public agency is like the tip of an iceberg, offering a small glimpse of that individual. Connecting these dots provides a multi-dimensional picture of people experiencing homelessness.

Linked administrative records from client contacts with public agencies, including providers of homeless services health care, mental and behavioral health care, public assistance, child protective services, and the justice system, reveal the course of individuals' lives. In aggregate, these records can be used to identify factors associated with a high probability of becoming chronically homeless. These predictive factors can then be used to screen records of individuals who are newly homeless to identify those who are most likely to become chronically homeless and target them for immediate assistance.

Chronic homelessness is a catastrophe resulting from multiple failures, both before and after the onset of homelessness. Client records can be used to identify and stop this cascade of failures.

Summary

The average rate of chronic homelessness within the point-in-time homeless population is 30 percent. Rates of chronic homelessness increase with age whereas rates of new entrants into homelessness decrease with age.

Far fewer chronically homeless individuals are part of families with children, or are working or looking for work. Every reported health condition is two to three

times more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals than among first-time homeless.

Justice system histories are more prevalent among chronically homeless individuals. Two-thirds of chronically homeless men and half of chronically homeless women have been incarcerated.

Similar rates of chronic homelessness across homeless individuals in all ethnic and gender groups show that even though unequal social conditions propel more men and African-Americans into homelessness, once homeless, the risk that this will become a chronic condition is shared equally.

Chronic homelessness is a catastrophe resulting from multiple failures, both before and after the onset of homelessness. Client records can be used to identify and stop this cascade of failures. Linked administrative records from client contacts with public agencies can be used to identify and help individuals who are most likely to become chronically homeless.



Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

Six key findings in this report lead to twelve recommended actions for combating chronic homelessness. The findings are:

- *First*, the total population that experiences homelessness is far larger than the chronically homeless population and includes many people who have short episodes of homelessness.
- *Second*, increasing the already large number of people who quickly exit homelessness will dramatically stem the flow of people into chronic homelessness.
- *Third*, social, medical, legal, and economic wreckage accumulates on the path to chronic homelessness. This accumulation of new impediments makes it ever more difficult and costly to exit homelessness.
- *Fourth*, most homeless adults want to support themselves through work. This goal is strongest and most feasible among new entrants into homelessness, making it viable as an early intervention for escaping homelessness.
- *Fifth*, new screening tools are needed to differentiate among newly homeless individuals to identify those who are at high risk of going on to become chronically homeless and prioritize them for early intervention.
- *Sixth*, Homelessness results from system-wide failures and requires system-wide engagement. Homeless service providers can't solve this problem by themselves.

Efforts Already Underway

Most of the interventions recommended in this report are being piloted, but often as small scale, stand-alone efforts. To effectively combat chronic homelessness, interventions must be:

- Targeted to accurately prioritize individuals at high risk of chronic homelessness.
- Integrated as system-wide responses rather than siloed in the homeless service provider system.
- Expanded to a scale that is proportional to the homeless crisis.

Los Angeles County's Office of Homeless Initiative identified the following initiatives that are already being implemented:

- *Prevention*: Housing retentions services are provided for families and individuals.
- *Vehicles and Hygiene Facilities*: Toilets and sinks have been deployed at four sites near encampments in unincorporated areas of the county and a pilot mobile shower program has been launched.

- *Homeless Families:* Family reunification housing subsidies are being provided.
- *Decriminalization:* The Sheriff has adopted a decriminalization policy and trained hundreds of officers in effective outreach and engagement strategies.
- *Youth:* Service coordination, rapid rehousing and crisis housing are being provided for transition age youth. Efforts are being made to avoid discharging foster and probation youth into homelessness.
- *Employment:* Efforts are underway to connect people experiencing homelessness with the workforce development system, provide subsidized employment, training, and job placement assistance. And individuals are being assisted in accessing their vital records.
- *Predictive Analytics:* The County is exploring analytic models to improve screening and targeting within the homeless service delivery system. Expanded data and information sharing will support efforts to link administrative records and more effectively target services.

The *Breaking Barriers* program in the County's Office of Diversion and Reentry is a system-wide effort that integrates health care and justice system resources. It provides case management, flexible housing and employment for jail inmates with mental health or substance use disorders. It has reduced recidivism and improved health outcomes by diverting inmates into community based treatment and supportive housing.

The County's *Subsidized Employment Program* for parents receiving CalWORKs cash aid (authorized under AB 74) pays parents' wages during their first six months in a job and could be targeted on homeless parents. The plan for this program that was submitted to the California Department of Social Services included a goal of placing 3,401 participants in jobs annually.³⁰

Recommendations

Develop and implement predictive analytic screening tools to prioritize and target interventions for new entrants into homelessness

1. *Newly Homeless At Greatest Risk of Chronic Homelessness:* Increase early and lasting exits from homelessness by using system-based screening tools to analyze linked administrative records from public and publicly-funded agencies for individuals who are newly homeless to identify those who are most likely to become chronically homeless and target them for immediate assistance.
2. *Ongoing, Real-Time Linking of Client Records:* Implement system-based screening programs using linked administrative records for healthcare, social services, homeless services, employment, and justice system involvement for individuals experiencing homelessness to identify newly homeless individuals who are at risk of chronic homelessness and prioritize them for targeted assistance. Use the Homeless Management

Information System (HMIS) as a tool for informing service providers about individuals who have been prioritized for targeted interventions.

3. *Prevent Homelessness*: When a reliable predictive model has been developed, screen precariously housed clients who interface with County systems to identify those at greatest risk of entering homelessness.
4. *Homeless Children*: Investigate the long-term outcomes for children who experience homelessness and develop a reliable predictive model for identifying those at great risk of lasting harm.

Integrate mainstream human service delivery organizations in combating homelessness

5. *System-Wide Engagement*: Integrate all mainstream housing, social service, health care, and employment organizations into integrated, comprehensive efforts to help homeless residents achieve permanent exits from homelessness.

Provide targeted interventions

6. *Vehicles as Dwelling Places*: Help homeless individuals retain their vehicles by providing legal places to park together with hygiene facilities for occupants of the vehicles. In addition, provide cost-effective levels of financial assistance for paying vehicle registration and maintenance costs.
7. *Family Support*: Provide services for strengthening homeless families and equipping parents to care for and nurture their children, both those accompanying them and those in institutional care. This includes supporting parents in obtaining and keeping jobs, addressing behavioral health needs, and, where needed, developing successful parenting skills. Reducing risk for this group will provide multi-generational reductions in social service needs.
8. *Shelter for Parents and Children*: Provide immediate housing for homeless parents who are pregnant or accompanied by children and their families.
9. *Justice System Diversion*: Use arrests and incarceration as the last resort in responding to the life circumstances and actions of homeless individuals because arrest and incarceration increase the number of chronically homeless individuals. Expand already successful diversion programs into community based treatment and housing.
10. *Transition Age Youth*: Expand efforts to assist young adults 18 to 24 years of age experiencing homelessness, particularly those exiting foster care and juvenile detention. Needed services include skill development, employment, child care, behavioral health services, and integration into positive social networks.
11. *Job Training*: Improve access and suitability of education and job training opportunities for homeless individuals seeking employment who lack the skills needed to obtain a job.
12. *Employment*: Expand current efforts to place individuals experiencing homelessness in jobs. Attention should be focused on new entrants into homelessness, young adults, and individuals who are parents. Services

should include subsidized employment, temporary housing, child care, mobile phones, bus passes, clothes suitable for job interviews, and assistance in obtaining identity documents. Federal and state funded employment programs should assume a central role in providing intensive and comprehensive employment services for homeless residents.

Next Steps

This meta-analysis of information about homelessness experienced in Los Angeles County frames issues to be addressed through direct services as well as research. Chronic homelessness is a catastrophe and the result of multiple failures, both before and after the onset of homelessness. The next stage of Economic Roundtable research is focused on developing predictive analytic screening tools.

Linked administrative records from client contacts with public social service and law enforcement agencies are being used to identify and stop this cascade of failures. These linked records reveal the course of individuals' lives.

We are analyzing 15 years of linked records of individuals who experienced homelessness to identify factors associated with a high probability of becoming chronically homeless. These predictive factors can then be used to screen records of individuals who are newly homeless to identify those who are most likely to become chronically homeless and target them for immediate assistance.

The predictive screening tools will identify people for whom the escape route from homelessness costs less than the problem of remaining homeless.

These are homeless individuals likely to have high future costs for public services if there is not an intervention. They are also likely to have reductions in public costs after the intervention that offset the cost of the intervention. This type of predictive tool has already been developed to prioritize chronically homeless individuals for access to the scarce supply of permanent supportive housing. The new work will expand the array of evidence-driven interventions to include employment and services for foster youth.

End Notes

¹ *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2017;318(23):2293–2294.

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2661031?redirect=true>

² The Census Bureau classifies two types of housing as group quarters. Institutional group quarters includes correctional facilities, nursing homes and hospitals. Non-institutional group quarters includes college dormitories, military barracks, group homes, missions and homeless shelters. <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/group-quarters.html>

³ Morduch, Jonathan and Julie Siwicki (September 2017), “In and Out of Poverty: Poverty spells and income volatility in the U.S. Financial Diaries,” *Social Service Review*, Volume 91, Number 3, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/694180>

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2017), *The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress: Part 1*, Exhibit 2.9, page 29, shows Los Angeles County to have 47,082 total homeless individuals and New York City, the next largest, to have a total of 31,124 homeless individuals, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁵ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Homeless Count 2017 Los Angeles County Fact Sheet*, <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=1715-homeless-count-2017-los-angeles-continuum-of-care-fact-sheet.pdf>.

⁶ The estimate that \$900 a month in income will amortize approximately \$35,000 in debt for building or purchasing a housing unit is based on information provided by Yasmin Tong Consulting, whose work in finance and development has produced over \$1 billion in affordable housing:

- \$300 a month for rent, \$3,600 per year
- Interest rate on financing = 6 percent
- 15 year mortgage

⁷ Yasmin Tong Consulting provided the estimate that affordable units in Los Angeles County typically cost about \$335,000 to build. Wikipedia, *Star Apartments*, reports an even higher cost of \$392,000 per unit in 2014 to build this housing complex for homeless individuals in downtown Los Angeles, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Apartments.

⁸ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—Data Summary, Los Angeles County*, reports a chronically homeless population of 17,531 individuals, <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=1353-homeless-count-2017-countywide-results.pdf>

⁹ The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Continuum of Care includes all of Los Angeles County except for the cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena.

¹⁰ The population shown in the profile shown in represents 83 percent of the total Los Angeles County population residing in LASHA’s continuum of care and 88 percent of the average homeless population in the 11 homeless data sources used to produce the homeless profile. Most of those left out of the profile are in smaller ethnic groups. Only the three largest ethnic groups are shown because when groups are further divided by gender and age, only a small number of people are represented in many of the subgroups. The six demographic surveys that are included in the data had an average of about 3,600 people in each survey. Smaller ethnic groups, including Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and individuals with multiple ethnicities can be aggregated

into a single group, but because there are divergent trends among these different ethnicities, their overall average profile misrepresents many of them. Transgender individuals are not shown in the gender breakout because an average of only 29 transgender individuals were identified in each demographic survey, and further subdividing these individuals by age and ethnicity would create unreliable data because of the extremely small number of people in the subgroups.

¹¹ This composite profile uses data from the demographic survey, which is a quasi-random opportunity survey of homeless residents carried out separately from the homeless street count, as well as data from the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS) for individuals in homeless shelters during the month of January. It is not clear whether the demographic survey or HMIS data provides a more representative description of the total homeless population. The demographic survey is not random and therefore is not reliably representative. On the other hand, HMIS data captures the entire population of people in shelters, and therefore is representative of that population, but the sheltered population is self-selected in that not every homeless person chooses to use a shelter.

¹² Metraux, Stephen and Dennis P. Culhane (1999), *Analyzing Shelter Stays and Shelter Stay Patterns Using Administrative Data: An Overview of Practical Methods*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264838880_Analyzing_Shelter_Stays_and_Shelter_Stay_Patterns_Using_Administrative_Data_An_Overview_of_Practical_Methods

¹³ The responses shown for individuals 18–24 years of age are based on a small sample: 18 respondents in the 2016 demographic survey. This question was not asked in the 2017 youth demographic survey. There is a large margin of error with such a small sample.

¹⁴ Where possible, this report aggregates homeless count data from multiple years rather than relying on data from a single year. This is because of fluctuation from one count to the next in the demographic distribution of the population, which appears to be the result of sampling error rather than actual population changes. However, only the 2017 count provides demographic estimates of the breakout of sheltered vs. unsheltered individuals, making it the best source for this data. This estimate requires combining information about sheltered persons from the Home Management Information System (HMIS) with weighted estimates of unsheltered residents projected based on the street count and the demographic survey. For a discussion of count-to-count demographic fluctuation, see: Economic Roundtable (2017), *Who Counts? Assessing Accuracy of the Homeless Count*, <https://economicrt.org/publication/httpseconomicrt-orgwp-contentuploads201711who-counts-11-21-2017-pdf/>. There has been continuing change from one count to the next in the shares of individuals who were sheltered vs. unsheltered and in the types of dwellings occupied by unsheltered individuals. For example, from 2016 to 2017, the share of unsheltered individuals who spent their nights on a street, sidewalk or alley dropped from 53 percent to 34 percent, with corresponding increases reported in 2017 in the share of unsheltered individuals occupying tents or makeshift shelters. Because 2017 data offers the most recent snapshot of the changing landscape of homeless dwellings, we did not merge that data with earlier counts, even though data from a single year may be less reliable than integrated data from multiple years.

¹⁵ Economic Roundtable (1997), *Homeless Workers: A Labor Market Analysis*, <https://economicrt.org/publication/homeless-workers-2/>.

¹⁶ These conversion factors for the number of inhabitants in each type of vehicle are derived from questions asked in the demographic survey about whether the respondents have resided in vehicles, whether it was as a family or as unaccompanied adults, and how many people were in the vehicle. This methodology is explained in LAHSA's 2017 *Los Angeles Continuum of Care Homeless County Methodology Report*, pages 18–19: <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=1645-2017-los-angeles-continuum-of-care-homeless-count-methodology-report.pdf>.

<i>Type of Dwelling</i>	<i>Number Occupied by Individuals</i>	<i>Individual Weight</i>	<i>Number Occupied by Families</i>	<i>Family Weight</i>	<i>Average Weight per Dwelling</i>
Car	639	1.518	51	2.963	1.625
Van	277	1.772	6	3.458	1.808
RV/Camper	350	2.050	9	3.519	2.087
ALL VEHICLES	1,266	1.721	66	3.084	1.788
Tent	1,809	1.691	17	3.777	1.710
Makeshift Shelter	1,210	1.916	11	3.688	1.932
TENTS/SHELTERS	3,019	1.781	28	3.742	1.799
ALL DWELLINGS	4,285	1.763	94	3.280	1.796

¹⁷ Blasi, Gary and Forrest Stuart (September 15, 2008), *Has the Safer Cities Initiative in Skid Row Reduced Serious Crime?*

http://wraphome.org/wraparchives/downloads/safer_cities.pdf

¹⁸ City of Los Angeles crime data from 2010 to 2017 downloaded from the Los Angeles Open Data web site: <https://data.lacity.org/>.

¹⁹ This data is from the demographic surveys conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority in 2007 and 2009 – the only years when these questions were asked.

²⁰ Economic Roundtable (2017), *Who Counts? Assessing Accuracy of the Homeless Count*, pp. 21-22, <https://economicrt.org/publication/>.

²¹ Kidsdata, <http://kidsdata.org/topic/20/fostercare/table#fmt=2493&loc=364&tf=84&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc> (accessed September 25, 2017).

²² California Child Welfare Indicators Project, http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/Exits.aspx?r=5 (accessed September 25, 2017).

²³ Data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) was used to describe the structure of parenthood because this database include a far larger number of households with children than the demographic surveys.

²⁴ The California Department of Education's definition of homeless children and youths is as follows: "The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youths as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition also includes:

- Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Children and youths who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters, or awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, or
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above

Source: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/homelessdef.asp>

²⁵ Los Angeles County Office of Education, *Homeless Education Update, 2015-2016 School Year: LA County Homeless Student Count by Grade* (2016).

²⁶ General Relief and CalWORKs average amounts are from Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, *DPSS at a Glance, February 2017*,

<http://dpss.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dpss>. SSI/SSDI minimum amount is from Social Security Administration Research, Statistics and Policy Analysis, *Table 3, Number of recipients in state (by eligibility category, age, and receipt of OASDI benefits) and amount of payments, by county, December 2016*, https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/. Social Security minimum retirement benefit is from Social Security Administration, *Primary Insurance Amount and Maximum Family Benefit, Effective for December 2017*, <https://www.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/smt.cgi>. Unemployment insurance minimum amount is from California Employment Development Department, with weekly minimum converted to monthly equivalent, <http://www.edd.ca.gov/unemployment/Eligibility.htm>.

²⁷ The maximum and average amount of monthly General Relief/Assistance benefits provided by large urban California counties is shown below. Information about total monthly benefits paid, average benefit amount and the caseload in January 2018 is from the California Department of Social Services GR237 report, <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Research-and-Data/Disability-Adult-Programs-Data-Tables/GR-237>. The estimated size of the indigent adult population in each county is from the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample 2011–2015, based on records for individuals who were 18 years of age or older, living alone or in group quarters, with incomes that were 50 percent or less of the poverty threshold. This is a conservative proxy for the actual size of the eligible population, but it provides a consistent measure for indexing and comparing county coverage rates.

County	Maximum Benefit Amount	Total Monthly Benefits Paid	Average Benefit Amount	Caseload January 2018	Indigent Adult Population	Percentage of Indigent Population Covered
Alameda	\$336	\$2,592,776	\$291	8,899	14,292	62%
Los Angeles	\$221	\$15,614,058	\$182	85,802	93,444	92%
Orange	\$317	\$1,129,414	\$277	4,070	21,117	19%
Sacramento	\$271	\$1,022,007	\$215	4,754	14,707	32%
San Diego	\$337	\$832,845	\$267	3,120	29,191	11%
San Francisco	\$440	\$1,714,952	\$369	4,649	13,732	34%
Santa Clara	\$343	\$603,595	\$163	3,701	12,092	31%
CALIFORNIA		\$25,962,590	\$203	127,889	322,449	40%

²⁸ Federal Register (January 31, 2017). Health and Human Services Department Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/31/2017-02076/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines>.

²⁹ Blasi, Gary and Joseph W. Doherty, UCLA School of Law (2010), *California Employment and Discrimination Law and Its Enforcement: The Fair Employment and Housing Act at 50*, https://law.ucla.edu/~media/Files/UCLA/Law/Pages/Publications/CEN_RAN_PUB%20FEHA.ashx

³⁰ Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (July 22, 2014), “Assembly Bill (AB) 74 County Welfare Department (CWD) Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) Plan,” http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks/res/pdf/ESE_Plans/LA.pdf.